



The Emperor, Haile Sellassie I, Emperor of Abyssinia,
King of Kings, Conquering Lion of Judah

Frontispiece

Eight Years in Abyssinia

by
Fan. C. Dunckley

With 19 Illustrations

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To

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who also shared in these days

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EIGHT YEARS IN ABYSSINIA

CHAPTER ONE

I WAS warned, when it had been decided that my husband was to go to Abyssinia, that the country was very much "behind the times," and that if I were not blessed with a sense of humour, or prepared to cultivate that sense, my life would not be altogether a bed of roses. Fortunately, I have been blessed—or cursed—with that sense and can see the funny side of things, even under adverse circumstances, so I took my courage in my hands and decided to accompany my good man.

I read every book on Abyssinia I could procure both before going out to, and during my residence in, that country, and it is due to the superficial knowledge and false impressions gathered from these books that I am emboldened to put into writing my experiences (spread over some years) of that delightful country, and to add to the almost endless "literature" on the land of Prester John and Prince Rasselas, names better known to the average reader than those of Ethiopia (the modern name for Abyssinia) or the Emperor Menelik.

It is not easy to reach the heart of Abyssinia. There is a regular French mail service from Marseilles direct to Djibouti, in French Somaliland—the Port for Abyssinia—but we decided to travel P. & O. to Aden and then cross over to Djibouti by the "ferry boat," or, if our luck were in, to get a Messageries boat across. The ferry is comfortable enough, but being somewhat small one has to endure the horrors of seasickness in the 12 hours' passage across. Never shall I forget my first experience of a "bath" in Aden. There was no regular supply, as

there is now, and water was accordingly scarce. The "bath" was a bucket suspended from the ceiling and you pulled a string, which opened a rose and allowed a shower of luke-warm water to descend upon you. On our arrival at Fishstein's—then the Grand Hotel of Aden—our first demand was for a bath, and accordingly, after the minimum of unpacking, I wandered along to the bathroom. To my consternation I found I could not reach the string—I am on the short side, the ceiling was high, and the end of the string well out of my reach. I made vain efforts to get that string, and was on the point of giving up the attempt when my husband, not able to account for the delay, came along to see what was the matter and found me in the act of making one of my ineffectual jumps for the string. He gave way to unrestrained laughter—my temper, as may be imagined, was by this time a bit frayed and I could not at first see where the humour lay—but it must have been a humorous spectacle to see me in my birthday suit jumping for that elusive string. I ended by having my bath in a shallow circular tin.

When we descended for dinner we were greeted with a peculiar musty smell in the dining-room.

"Those damned mermaids"—muttered my good man.

"Mermaids!" quoth I—"you are pulling my leg—there are no such things."

"I am not—but I am not going to disillusion you until to-morrow when we shall have good honest daylight to support us." Next morning he was true to his word, and after breakfast exhibited the mermaids to me—at the other end of the dining-room! These were some animals found in the sea round Aden—half-human, half-fish—dark brown coarse skins, negroid heads, almost human breasts, fins, with the bones of a human hand attached almost to the shoulder blade, and a fish-like tail. They were stuffed with straw and the

"coffins" in which they were resting had been plentifully sprinkled with naphthaline. There were two of these "mummies," male and female, and each weighed from 10 to 12 cwt. I did not enjoy a single meal in that dining-room. Fishstein was away on the Continent "touring with a further supply of his mermaids." Gone were my illusions about long, golden-haired mermaids fascinating humans to their doom with their glorious voices!

Aden to the passer-through appears to be the last place on earth, left unfinished, but my good man had a fond spot for it in his heart and said there were worse places. He had spent the last year of the War here and under his guidance we toured the former battlefields and defences. Apropos of this little-known force during the Great War a good story was told me. The Turks had driven the British back to Khor-Maksar, on the outskirts of Aden, but had been driven back in turn and strongly-entrenched lines well on the mainland were held. A high official of "Uncle Sam's" Army had landed in Aden and was being shown round and taken to the most advanced post—Darb. Here Uncle Sam's representative, after surveying the boundless expanse of sand, asked what we were fighting for, and when he received the reply "For this desert—to keep the Turks out of Aden," he answered, "Waal—why not let them have it," and proceeded to mount his horse. We spent the best part of four days in Aden—and by that time I was inclined to agree with my good man that there were possibilities of making life pleasant, and I was genuinely sorry to embark for Djibouti. We were lucky, we were able to catch a Messageries boat across and escaped the terrors of the crossing in the ferry.

We arrived at Djibouti at night, and even then, out in the harbour, it was sweltering hot. What would it be like ashore, the mercury bubbling through the top of the

thermometer? Long drinks, followed by bed under an electric fan, made the first night bearable.

Djibouti, the port and capital of French Somaliland, is the entrance to Abyssinia, and this is its only claim to fame. Here begins the single-line railway track to Addis Ababa, 497½ miles away, a line that took 25 years to complete and in which a large British financial interest was held. There was a bi-weekly service—and as we had just missed the mid-week train, had to wait for the next train on Sunday, so spent the time investigating the town and shipping and trading activities. The houses are built from white coral obtained locally, and the whiteness is almost blinding in the strong sunlight. The town is clean but uninteresting—the enforced stay of two or three days can, however, be spent pleasantly enough. There are comfortable hotels, adapted to the tropical conditions, but beware of having a “cold” bath from the showers. The water tanks for the town supply are exposed to the merciless heat of the sun, with the result that the water is nearly at boiling point during the afternoon and early evening, when it reaches the unsuspecting new-comer. Residents draw off enough water, morning and evening, and allow it to stand to cool off. Djibouti, without doubt, is a “hot spot”; the heat seems to come up in a mist, and clothes are worn only for the sake of decency, the least consistent with respectability. It is here in the leading hotel that there are notices in the bedrooms asking visitors not to walk about in a state of nudity. And—the notice is not superfluous! From 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Djibouti is like a city of the dead, with a vast heavy stillness brooding over it. All offices, etc., are closed, no trucks, conveying hides or coffee or other produce are allowed, the playing of gramophones is forbidden, whilst the inhabitants breakfast, or lunch, and sleep, if they can, until 3 p.m.

Earthquakes—or more correctly earth tremors—are

common occurrences in Djibouti. They happen every year but are not accompanied by loss of human lives, and the material damage suffered is comparatively light. The houses are substantially built, and it has to be a tremor of more than usual severity to produce cracks in the walls. These tremors continue, at irregular periods, for some days, and nobody takes much notice of them; life goes on as usual and one waits patiently for the final movement. I have experienced one or two of these earthquakes and the feeling is decidedly unpleasant. The ground below one seems to give a quiver and then settles down as if a giant beneath were turning over in bed. Residents may perhaps get inured to these tremors, but I personally, made a point of bolting out into the open at the first quiver, and it was with the greatest reluctance that I entered a building whilst these shocks were expected. Djibouti is popularly supposed to be built on great reefs of coral, and I imagine that these tremors are movements in these reefs, the coral settling down or moving slightly.

The amenities of the town and its attractions (?) are exhausted in two days, and the day of departure looked forward to. I had to accustom myself to doing without tea or putting up with buffalo's or goat's milk, as cow's milk is quite unobtainable. Fresh milk at that is only to be had for early morning tea or breakfast. Milk for afternoon tea is always from a tin, and I can never get myself to appreciate this. I am suspicious of goat's milk, but do not mind buffalo's milk in the least, although it is very rich. The train leaves Djibouti at about 6.30 a.m. and this means an early breakfast—a meal at which I am not at my best; there are no restaurant cars on the train and the experienced traveller carries with him his drinks, ice, fruit, etc. On the journey from Djibouti to Addis Ababa, after a hurried breakfast in the early hours of the morning, there is a very empty interval until lunch,

which is not usually obtainable at the specified halting places until after 1 p.m. In our frequent journeys down the line I always catered for a "snack" somewhere about 10 a.m., and this was always highly appreciated. Even in the hot weather tea, from a thermos flask, was always welcome. Of course, afternoon tea was out of the question at any of the buffets or stations and I had to cater for this also. I could never get used to these Continental hours for meals, with innumerable cups of black coffee in between, and always adhered to the English breakfasts at 8, even in Djibouti.

By 8 o'clock the train is well into the French Somali desert, and the miseries of the journey, even in the so-called cool weather, begin. The less said about French Somaliland the better—the whole country is desolation itself, a mass of burning rock and sand, unrelieved by any form of vegetation and broken by innumerable ravines. No human habitation can be seen, although there are herds of goats and sheep to be seen grazing or being driven to some unknown destination. The heat, glare, dust and general discomfort of a journey through this forbidding country must be experienced to be realized to the full. But it has to be endured. Yet it is surprising that the country is not a drain on the French Exchequer, a contrast to neighbouring British Somaliland. Djibouti, however, has the advantage of handling the produce from Abyssinia and has a considerable salt industry, which provide revenue for the Colony. Zeila, in British Somaliland, could, with a moderate expenditure, be developed also in the way of salt production.

The journey through the uninviting country of French Somaliland is a nightmare and one is unfeignedly glad to arrive at Douanlé, the Abyssinia Frontier Post, where passports are examined—but passengers need not descend from the train as Abyssinian officials come aboard. After this the country gets more rugged—the Tchercher moun-

tains running parallel to the line—and it is perceptibly cooler. The line is rising all the time until Dire Dawa, 4,000 feet high, is reached for the first night's halt. On our first experience, by some oversight we had not telegraphed reserving our accommodation, and we had to use the manager's room. A welcome bath, followed by dinner under orange trees, makes up, in part, for the journey accomplished and the discomfort endured.

Dire Dawa, the workshop of the French railway line, has been aptly termed "a street in the desert," and calls for little or no comment. The European part of the settlement is divided from the native part by a river, dry for most part of the year. Natives use the bed of the river as latrines, and some of the poorest have made homes for themselves under the banks. Hides, coffee, etc., from the Tchercher Province, and from Harrar, come into Dire Dawa to be railed to Djibouti, and there is a certain amount of business doing in consequence. The visitor, however, sees little, or nothing, of this.

Leaving Dire Dawa early next morning—after an exasperating time with the Customs authorities—the journey is still hot but more interesting.

In the Customs Hall at Dire Dawa Station there are notices "Beware of Pickpockets," and the notices are necessary. The hall is packed with a seething mass of humanity on the arrival and departure of trains, and passengers can be quite easy prey for these gentry—pickpockets in a country like Abyssinia seem quite out of place.

At Errer, the Emperor has an experimental fruit farm, and as there are some medicinal springs here he has built a "hydro." A short holiday can be spent most agreeably here, especially if you are keen on shooting, but the mosquitoes are bad and it is reported to be malarial.

The train literally creeps along the foot of the Tchercher Range—twisting in and out through gorges,

over ravines, over flimsy bridges or stone culverts—and one wonders whether the French engineers, who built the railway, always took the best course. Sometimes in the torrential rains the bridges are washed away, and traffic is held up indefinitely and Abyssinia cut off from the outer world. This happened in 1929 when I had been having a change from the altitude, spending six weeks or so in Dire Dawa, my only pleasure being “train nights” when we were given a dinner worth eating.

It had rained heaven’s hardest during the night at Dire Dawa, and as I lay in bed listening to the rain beating down upon the roof I wondered if the line could stand up against it. Next morning a report was brought in that a bridge near Error had been washed away and traffic suspended. It would take some weeks, if not months, to restore the bridge—in the meantime the train service must continue. Trains from Dire Dawa ran to the break, whilst another train from Harwash came up to the break the other side. Passengers had to fend for themselves in making the transfer from one train to the other whilst *guragis* (porters) handled the baggage and heavy goods across. We had to return to Addis Ababa and I experienced the discomfort as no permanent arrangements had been made then. We slithered down from the line a steep decline to the river-bed, and I finished up against a tree. I was carried across pick-a-back on the back of a *guragi*, and deposited unceremoniously on the other side, and was then pushed and pulled up the opposite bank. There was naturally a long delay, but everybody took it in good humour, except a fellow passenger, a young Englishman, who had a heavy wardrobe trunk in the guard’s van. Four *guragis* were required to carry this across, and our friend had many anxious moments watching this trunk being carried across that torrent. It was the very last package to be put on the train.

Goods from Djibouti and produce from Abyssinia were piling up owing to the break and the railway authorities were forced to take some steps to relieve the congestion. Between the break a road was hastily constructed, an "Irish ford" being made across the river—which had greatly subsided—and lorries, brought down by train, were put into use for the conveyance of goods, etc. It was some months before the bridge was reconstructed and the normal service resumed.

Lunch is obtainable at three wayside buffets—but as the cooking is Greek, oily, and with plenty of garlic, we preferred, on subsequent journeys, to take our own hampers of cold chicken, tinned fruit, etc., and I became quite expert in packing a hamper for the three days' journey. At these wayside buffets if there are five courses five plates are piled up on top of each other on the table in front of the customer, but only one knife, fork, and spoon are provided, the same implements being used for each course, but being wiped on the bread! And it is here that I discovered why there is a hole made in the middle of a slice of pineapple. I was facing a table composed of four men—they might have been Greek, French, Armenian or Italian—and to my amazement, as one of the party did not like the appearance of the soup, he threw it against the wall of the dining-room! When the "sweets," composed of tinned pineapple slices, came round, the gentleman in question helped himself liberally, put his forefinger through the hole of each slice and gradually ate the pineapple from his finger, licking it appreciatively when he had finished.

Lonely, solidly built stone graves alongside the line point the price paid in human lives during the construction of the railway. Twisting, turning, creeping, crawling round the base of the hills—the River Harwash comes into view about sunset and is crossed by a "spidery" bridge, with the river many hundred feet below. This

bridge was being constructed by a German on the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. His work was taken over and completed by the French but the German was never paid for the work done. In compensation, he was given the contract for building the Tomb to Menelik, in the palace grounds at Addis Ababa. Harwash Station, where the night is to be spent, is reached soon after and turns out to be a primitive station, dumped in the middle of a vast sandy plain, with a buffet and sleeping apartments attached. One is glad to get out of the train and to get a cup of tea (milk, however, is not always available) and after a change a cool drink (if the ice has been fetched from the train) is more than welcome. There is a bathroom, but it is kept locked, and on the only occasion I asked for a bath here, the commotion raised by so extraordinary a demand, and the dust and dirt of ages in the bathroom, made me shudder and do without my bath. All the rooms are heavily barred and wire gauze is fitted to all the windows—mosquitoes and prowling jackals and hyenas and other animals abound. Dinner and to bed, to sleep if the wind and noise of the animals will allow you.

It was at Harwash on one occasion that we were guilty of bad manners, but I think in the circumstances we could be forgiven. It had been a rotten journey down, it was really hot, and the train was late in arriving. The sleeping apartments in the buffet are not too solidly built and conversations in one room can be easily heard in the room adjoining, especially if there is a badly-fitting communicating door. Our neighbour on this occasion was an Abyssinian of rank proceeding to Europe to take up his duties as Ethiopian Minister, and he was attended by his usual retainers and followers who crowded into the room and overflowed on to the veranda. Abyssinians are great talkers and seem to be able to do with very little sleep. We were in bed by 11 p.m., as we had to make

a start at 5 a.m., but our neighbour had not even had his evening meal by then. There was a continual chattering going on in the next room and we endured it till about 2 a.m. when our patience was exhausted and my husband shouted out a very curt and peremptory "zimbal" (shut up). It was effective—silence reigned, and we were able to snatch two or three hours of sleep before we were called for the train. An early rise with a hasty breakfast of eggs, marmalade and coffee and the last lap to Addis Ababa begins.

This part of the journey is by far the most interesting, the train climbing and snorting up 5,000 feet into the highlands, the heart of Abyssinia, during the day. The train can only be said to "jog along," no violent speeds are achieved, and there are frequent halts by the wayside—on one occasion the train stopped whilst the fireman and guard repaired a telephone wire. It is apparently part of their duties to keep an eye on the telephone wires and to repair any slight damage. The scenery changes, growing more rugged, the ground appears more broken by ravines and water courses; the type of inhabitant changes, the true Abyssinian highlander now predominating. Cultivation is more in evidence, the old wooden plough, drawn by oxen, as used in Biblical times, still being used, and the atmosphere becomes decidedly cooler, necessitating a change to warmer "Europe" clothing.

The first glimpses of Addis Ababa are very attractive. The whole town appears to be buried in a forest of eucalyptus (blue gum) and it is only as one gets nearer that the place takes shape and houses and buildings can be picked out, with the Emperor's Palace standing up prominently and appearing to dominate the town. The train draws into the station—now a modern building completed in 1930—and pandemonium is let loose with a howling mob fighting for the privileges of handling the

luggage, and regardless of the fact that the passengers are not able to get out of the carriages as all egress is barred by the mob. Then, once again, through the Customs, here as everywhere else in the world, a vexatious proceeding, and out into the open courtyard with a golden statue of the "Lion of Judah" fronting you. Private motor-cars—ranging from the "flivver" to the most luxurious; taxis of decided old vintage; restive riding ponies, gaily saddled mules, all go to make an incongruous picture, the modern alongside the medieval. In spite of the novelty one is glad to get away with the least possible delay as the interests of the journey do not in the least compensate for the weariness of it.

Conditions compelled me to make the journey frequently, at least every three months during the first two years I spent in the country, and it was rare that the journey was uneventful. There was the incident when every seat in every carriage was taken from Harwash to Addis Ababa, and we were put into the coupé-lit—attached during the night—and refused to move even although it was reserved for the Abyssinian Director-General of the Railway. It was an embarrassing moment when he arrived on the scene and wanted his compartment—we were installed and there wasn't another seat to be had on the train—and there wasn't another train for three days, so we decided to "sit tight." The courtly old gentleman recognized the position, and ended by sitting on a campstool in the compartment reserved for him.

There was another incident which lingers. We were halted at a little wayside station and the commotion outside the train was louder than usual and seemed to be concentrating outside our carriage. It would appear that an Italian subject had killed the brother of a Somali British subject a day or two previously—the relatives of the murdered man were becoming increasingly insistent

upon "lynch" law and were clamouring for the case to be tried there and then by my husband. Naturally my good man shirked the responsibility, and promised that he would inform the British Consul at Addis Ababa who would go properly into the matter, and it was only with the greatest reluctance that the parties to the case agreed to this course, and the train was allowed to proceed.

Travelling by the "express" on one occasion, when troubles were threatening in Addis Ababa, there was an unduly long delay at Harwash, where we had dined, before proceeding on the last portion of the journey up to Addis Ababa. We had made ourselves comfortable for the night and expected the train to move off at any moment, but there seemed to be an unusual disturbance, and we made it a rule not to interfere in anything which was not our business. Hours seemed to pass and the row seemed to be increasing; we could not lie there unconcernedly any longer so my husband went along to find out what it was all about. A very agitated European passenger explained that a Chief had joined the train and wanted his numerous followers to be in attendance upon the train, but as there were no third-class carriages on these night trains he was insisting that they should be allowed to travel second class without paying the difference in fares. The railway authorities would not allow this, the second-class passengers would not permit it either as they would be overcrowded. At the bottom of the trouble, however, was the secret fear that these wild-looking lawless tribesmen, if allowed to travel as passengers by the night train, would overpower the driver, fireman and guard at some lonely station during the night and rob the passengers. That was the theory advanced by the passenger who seemed to be the ringleader, and he wanted my husband to add his protestations. Of course a "hold-up" was possible—anything is possible in those parts—but there was no need to display any nervousness

in advance on this score, and if the station-master explained the matter to the Chief and arranged for some, a few, of the followers to accompany him, and the rest to follow by the next train, he was sure to be reasonable and accept the position; it turned out to be so, and the train was allowed to proceed, many hours late. It was not agreeable to be delayed in a place like Harwash at night, as wild animals were known to abound and it was a favourite resort for hunters after big game.

Perhaps the most "clinging" incident I remember was over a cactus. During one of our walks in the desert outside Dire Dawa I came across a most unusual form of flowering cactus, and thought it would be an ornamental addition to my garden in Addis Ababa, so told our servant, who was accompanying us, to dig it up. When we got to the hotel the "slave" put the cactus into an empty biscuit tin and left it in our room for the night as we were leaving next morning. After dinner when we retired to bed there was an indescribable, disagreeable smell in the room for which I could not account. I thought I knew all the smells that could be produced but this one was new to me. Perhaps cats had wandered in during our absence, and I left it at that. Next morning the cactus was placed, with our luggage, in our compartment but that disagreeable smell persisted. It was borne slowly upon me that my highly-prized cactus was the offender, so I relegated it to the lavatory attached to the carriage. In that confined space the smell intensified and permeated through to the carriage—which fortunately we had to ourselves. With all the windows open we could not get rid of that odour, so reluctantly I had to agree to my cactus being thrown out of the window. For nearly 24 hours had we endured the smell. I have encountered only one other more objectionable and that is civet—used as a basis for the most expensive perfumes, owing to its clinging characteristics.

Within recent years an "express" has been put on, during the "dry season," the journey taking 36 hours, instead of three days, for the 500 miles. The journey from Djibouti to Dire Dawa is done by night; the portion Dire Dawa to Harwash—the most difficult part—by day and the last lap to Addis Ababa again by night, Addis Ababa being reached in the early hours of the morning. This "express" journey is infinitely more comfortable, especially in the coupé-lit, and less wearisome than the usual service.

It is the ambition of the railway company to be able to make the journey regularly in 36 hours in some distant future *when* the permanent way has been put into condition and for this purpose Afdem—where the train now stops for lunch on the second day—will be converted into a hotel with proper sleeping accommodation. Dire Dawa will probably remain as it is, owing to the railway workshops there and to it being the nearest station for Harrar, the road to which has recently been constructed.

At Addas, the station before Addis Ababa, the Emperor has built a country house for himself—at least it was intended for that purpose. It is a delightful spot with wonderful views across a long plain, ending in some distant hills. Behind the buildings there is a lake on which sailing and rowing can be indulged, and bathing for the hardy. Addas is about 2,000 feet below Addis Ababa, and even this slight descent makes a change from the rarified air in Addis Ababa. The Emperor has not been able to make use of his country residence and has now leased it to a Greek who tries to run it as an hotel but not with much success, at least up to the time we left.

All praise is due to the company for maintaining the service in face of obstacles. In 1929 a bridge was washed away during the rains. Spares had been collected at Dire Dawa to meet an emergency of this nature, but when these were indented for, there were none available, all

had been purloined and fresh supplies had to be obtained from France! Not so many years ago frequent "hold-ups" between Djibouti and Dire Dawa interfered with the service; the Danakil or Somali tore up the rails for his spear heads, pulled down the telegraph and telephone wires to be made into ornaments for his womenfolk, and generally made matters unpleasant, if not unhealthy. The Danakil tribe is not a pleasant race even to this day, and passengers are requested to pull down their blinds at night when passing through their country, as in a spirit of mischief the owner of a rifle may be tempted to have a shot at a passing lighted window. The singular of this race is known as a Danakil, collectively they are spoken of as the Dankalis—and our name is Dunckley. Shortly before our first arrival in the country there had been a raid by the Dankalis upon Djibouti; the town was still surrounded by barbed wire entanglements, and the raid was still a matter of conversation. A friend was accompanying us on our first journey up to Addis Ababa and the conversation he was having with an acquaintance turned on the raid. We were perfect strangers to every one else in the train and they could not have known our names, so my amazement and indignation may be realized when I overheard: "When these b . . . Dankalis arrived, etc." Our friend looked aghast and yet amused—explanations and introductions followed. I did not ever again use the plural Dankalis when speaking of this turbulent tribe. Peace has only been made by the Abyssinian Government agreeing not to interfere with the Dankalis so long as they do not interfere with the railway.

The entrance from French Somaliland into Abyssinia is like leaving the pavement in stark, staring, scorching sunlight to enter a cool, dim building, whilst the railway can be compared to a staircase to this high landing of green and fertility, and a good deal nearer the stars.

CHAPTER TWO

ADDIS ABABA has a delightful climate, similar to that of the late spring or early summer day at home. For nine months in the year there is bright sun all day, tempered with cool breezes and the evenings are too cold to sit outside with comfort. Sitting in the shade one gets to feel quite cold and is driven into the sunshine, only to be glad to get back to the shade, owing to the heat. For the remaining three months it *rains*. The South-West Monsoon breaks regularly about the middle of June, and soon all roads leading out of the capital are quagmires. The altitude, however, about 8,000 feet, takes some getting used to, and it affects people differently. My husband, poor man, felt it immediately on his first arrival in the country. It was strange to see him really exhilarated after one, and one only, whisky and Perrier; the Perrier went straight to his head. After that experience he kept to whisky and water, or the local sodas which were not so gaseous. I did not feel it until I had been some six months in the country; stooping made me feel really dizzy, and I found it quite impossible to lace my riding boots until I had my legs on a chair or on the bed. Sitting up suddenly in bed on waking caused the whole room to revolve, and I found I soon got puffed climbing the hills round the town. The effect, however, soon passed off, and apart from getting out of breath quickly, I did not notice the altitude to any great extent. There is something in the altitude of Addis Ababa, which compels one to go slowly, until the heart has adjusted its functioning to the height. The highest point round Addis Ababa is Mount Entoto,

rising to over 10,000 feet, and a range of hills, some distance away, encompass the plateau on which Addis Ababa itself is situated; thus Addis Ababa may be said to lie in a cup, and this probably accounts for the effects of "altitudinism"—rarified and still air in a depression which in itself is at an altitude of 8,000 feet. In South America the equator is across the breakfast table at a height corresponding to Addis Ababa, yet one rarely, if ever, hears of altitudinism in those parts.

The mornings in and round Addis Ababa are delightful, cool with a promise of heat later. The rising sun, seen through the morning mists, adds glamour and picturesqueness to ordinary every day squalid scenes. There is another peculiarity about the capital. The town is literally buried among eucalyptus. Riding within the confines of this belt of trees one does not seem to "tan" or be affected by the sun. But venture a mile or two outside, and the after-effects are almost bad enough to be painful—the face seems to be scorched and the skin burned, resulting in peeling to an unsightly degree in spite of liberal applications of vaseline.

At sunset, when all Abyssinians are wending their way home, as they must be in by 7 p.m., curls of pungent smoke, from dung or eucalyptus wood, arise from the thousands of *tukhuls*, and with the mists from the rivers create an atmosphere and picture that cannot be readily forgotten.

Addis Ababa is essentially a modern city, created to gratify a whim of the late Emperor Menelik. In 1896 Menelik formed a camp on the great plateau of the Entoto Hills where he could recruit his forces before leading them to repel the Italian invaders of his kingdom, and was so struck by the beauty of the surroundings that he vowed, if successful in battle, to build a new capital there in commemoration of victory. Having defeated the enemy heavily and caused their withdrawal he fulfilled his vow

by setting his troops to work as builders, and, within a very brief time, the new capital had begun to rise in the wilderness. The poetic name "Addis Ababa," meaning "new flower," was the grim old warrior's own choice.

This flower was, however, at one time very near to withering away. As the population of the "settlement" grew, the sides of the hills were denuded of the fine old cedars and junipers which were plentiful, and used for firewood. Rapidly these disappeared and there was actually a shortage of firewood, and the question became so serious that it was decided to move the capital 40 miles away to Addis Alem, where there were, and still are, large tracts of forest. A road was constructed from Addis Ababa to Addis Alem, but fortunately before the move was actually made the suggestion was put forward that eucalyptus, from Australia, should be imported and planted. The "blue gums" thrived, and now Addis Ababa is surrounded, and saved. The eucalyptus belts are being extended to the neighbouring hills and plains so that within a few more years the "new flower" will become the new forest. Eucalyptus in the highlands of Abyssinia grows at the rate of 12 feet a year and the wood is used for all sorts of purposes. Split, it is used for the framework of the *tukhuls*, for the fences, and for many other uses. Addis Alem remains to-day a skeleton, with a passable motor road leading to it. Beyond being a picturesque picnic spot, it is a convenient jumping-off place for "treks" to the interior. Mules, etc., take four days to cover the distance, whilst the journey can be made comfortably in four hours in a motor-car and the caravan picked up there.

An hotel, however, was being built there and as there are some sulphur springs, Addis Alem may bloom one day into a health resort for the residents of Addis Ababa wanting a change. The forests, too, surrounding Addis Alem are being exploited for the timber, and wood-working

camp, with permanent residences, are springing up. Already it is a favourite place for parties from Addis Ababa who camp out there and go shooting.

Within recent years—especially since the Coronation in 1930—Addis Ababa is being developed out of all recognition. Instead of the old mud and thatched native huts, picturesque in their surroundings of eucalyptus, stone houses with unsightly corrugated iron roofs are springing up in every direction. Many are left uncompleted owing to funds running short and are fast falling into decay. The old order passeth and with it the attractiveness of mud and thatch.

All roads in Addis Ababa seem to converge on the Emperor's palace, and from any point in the town the palace can be seen, perched as it is on a hill, and dominating the town and surrounding country. There are in fact two places—the late Empress's palace now occupied by the Emperor, and the Regent's now occupied by the heir-apparent. The Emperor's palace is an unsightly mixture of Oriental, African and European architecture, surrounded by defensive stone walls. It is a city in itself, the courtyards swarm with armed guards and crowds of men squatting on the ground doing nothing. All day long streams of people may be seen entering and leaving the main gates. Chiefs—in wild riotous coloured garments, with their mules and retinues, clutter up the various enclosures, foreign advisers in their motor-cars, "bagmen," official messengers from the various legations, smartly uniformed with pennons flying from their lances, visitors—all go to make a kaleidoscopic animated picture. Outside the walls—beggars, suffering from every infirmity, itinerant musicians with their primitive guitars and banjos made out of an enamelled basin and a sheep's bladder, and with strings made from gut, home-made fiddles, flutes made from bamboo reeds, drums of bladder and wood—begging for alms or play-

ing their weird instruments—all join in making a noise that can be best left to the imagination.

The audience hall, an annexe to the palace, is about 80 feet long approached by a fine flight of steps flanked by balustrades. Recently additions in the shape of enclosed glass verandas have been made. On the walls of the main hall are hung crimson curtains and all the decorations are in harmony. Valuable carpets cover the floor and lead up to the throne, raised on a dais. A canopy surmounted by a golden "Lion of Judah" covers the whole dais and throne. It is here that the Emperor receives his guests or grants audiences to unofficial visitors. At the back is the banquet room running at right angles to the main hall. The waiting-room for others waiting to see the Emperor is a contrast to the splendour of the audience hall. The walls of this room are papered, starting about four feet from the floor, the original mud and lath below being left exposed. This is no doubt done intentionally, as the native sits on the floor resting his head and highly "battered" hair against the wall—no wall paper could stand up against this—and close examination of the state of the wall is not recommended. The room is sparsely furnished with iron garden benches and tables—painted green. In one corner hangs a curtain, far from clean, and which has been used to staunch bleeding from a wound and in lieu of a pocket-handkerchief.

In former days, up to 1930, it was an easy matter to obtain an audience with the Regent or King and there were no regulations as to dress. It is different with the Emperor, and formal morning dress is essential. At the end of audience the favoured person attempts to back out of the Imperial Presence—down the length of the room—but trips up on one of the innumerable rugs, turns round, and unceremoniously stalks out. Ladies, when the Empress is present, give a royal curtsy—as if to

the wife of a European monarch. It is all very different to the good old days. It is still talked about that when the first British Minister appointed to Abyssinia had an audience with the Sovereign he rode up to the palace, escorted by his Indian Sowars. In riding clothes, and with a hunting crop, he entered the reception room—and with the aid of his hunting crop drove all the advisers, attendants, “hangers on,” out of the room and declared that his audience was with the Emperor alone. His name is mentioned with bated breath.

There are not many made roads in the town itself. one road, down a steep incline, leads to the station, a mile or so away. The new station building was formally opened by the Emperor—the railway authorities entertaining the residents for the evening. Towards the close, however, Abyssinian women, “lady loves” of officials of the railway were admitted. The few English women left hurriedly! The French point of view is not, happily, the same as the English is in cases like this. Although the station had been officially declared open the building was not used for some months after, owing to a difference of opinion between the government and railway authorities. For the official opening *zabaniahs* (policemen) had been furnished by the government. The railway authorities contended that these should continue to be provided by the government, who argued that being a railway station the policemen should be servants of the railway. Neither side would give way—and the building was not used. However, it is now being put to its proper use, but history does not relate how the matter was settled. Two Market Streets and a Bank Road constitute the other main roads in the town itself. The Market Streets are always thronged with a perambulating crowd during the hours of daylight. There are few modern public buildings. The post office, recently erected, is conspicuous. The Bank of Abyssinia (now

the State "Bank of Ethiopia") is of modern construction of brick and stone. There are only one or two other houses of any pretension, but new "jerry built" houses are springing up. Addis Ababa can be described as a "tin town" as all the houses are roofed with corrugated iron sheets which, although useful, can hardly be described as æsthetic in appearance, especially as the sheets are left in their natural state and soon rust. The lower Market Street leads down to a river, across which stands the American Legation and a *safar* (market) where the coffee traders from the interior sojourn. The upper Market Street continues on and joins the Addis Alem road—continuing for 60 kilometres—and built by Menelik. Some of the original bridges and culverts still stand—though badly in need of repair. The surface of the road is bad, and when I last drove along it badly needed resurfacing.

Along the road about two miles out is the American Mission Hospital—equipped with the most modern medical appliances and apparatus, and a boon to the poor sick and suffering of Addis Ababa.

Another road leads up to the Cathedral of St. George—although it was originally intended that it should go up Entoto it ceases to be a road soon after the Cathedral and becomes a track. Close to the Cathedral stood the famous "hangman's" tree where murderers were hanged in public and the bodies allowed to remain hanging. The tree has now been cut down and a statue to Menelik erected. There was a similar tree in our garden, and I imagine about as old. On one of the main branches there were remnants of rope—I used to like to think that a swing was here for children—not a hangman's noose, but one cannot be too certain of anything in Abyssinia.

There is one more road, leading to the foreign legations and beyond, to the Shola Plain. On either side of this road lie innumerable *tukhuls* and native

houses buried amongst the eucalyptus. Straight on leads to the British Legation, standing in a park-like enclosure of 60 acres, and once inside the visitor may be forgiven if he forgets he is in Abyssinia. The view from the steps of the legation is magnificent, spreading over the entire country of the plateau on which Addis Ababa stands.

At the back of this road there is a path leading to the Belgian Legation, formerly the Russian Legation. The house is rambling, but the grounds are extensive, backing on to the Entoto Hills. There is an imposing monument, containing the remains of a former Russian Minister, who died whilst walking in the grounds. The rent paid for this legation is utilised by the Emperor for making small allowances to the needy White Russian refugees in Abyssinia. The grounds, extensive as they are, have been curtailed and are only a portion of what the Russian Legation grounds were in the days of the Tsarist regime. Most of the grounds on which the various legations stand were given by Menelik. Continuing along this private road one comes to the new German Legation, with an imposing entrance, and bounded on all sides by deeply-banked rivers, and with another road leading to the Italian Legation. This road, edged with high barbed wire, is a veritable nightmare to horsemen and horses as it is narrow, with a steep fall one side into a river rushing below. The French Legation is in the same vicinity but across the river, and access is by quite a different road, leading past the club.

The best way of seeing the sights and street activities of Addis Ababa is from horseback. Pedestrians make way for horses, for the Abyssinian, just as much as any other Eastern race, hates being stamped upon by horses, and one looks over the heads of the jostling crowds. Walking is *infra dig* (the Abyssinian will make audible remarks about the *Faranji* being too poor to own a horse or car) and most uncomfortable owing to the rough

surface of the roads. Also, the habits and dress of the natives in the crowd do not invite closer contact. It is absolutely necessary to have a servant with you, whether you are riding or walking, as in the case of any untoward incident the servant can generally explain matters to the crowd, or even defend one if necessary. The old custom of "blood money" still exists; if a *Faranji* should hurt a native in any way and draw blood it may be expensive. I believe \$80 is the least demanded for the smallest drop of blood.

Riding in a motor-car develops nervous prostration for the passengers, if they are new-comers. There are rules of the road, but they are honoured more in the breach than in the observance. When the Emperor, as Ras Tafari, was in London in 1924 he admired the policemen controlling the traffic and determined to have his own police taught these duties. So "traffic controls" were instituted at the more important cross-roads, and although the idea was laudable the execution is laughable. The "point" thinks nothing of leaving his post to talk to a friend, or to accost a European and ask for a tip, leaving the congestion to sort itself out. On one occasion the point recognized my husband and in his desire to please nearly caused our car to run over a harmless pedestrian. He cleared the way vigorously and violently, throwing one onlooker nearly under our wheels—fortunately our brakes functioned. There is no speed limit, the driver, whether he be Abyssinian, Armenian, Greek or Arab, just "steps on the gas," blows his horn continuously and depends on his brakes to avoid accidents. The drivers of cars will pull up without any warning signal, will cross over to the other side of the road and start again without any regard for the other cars on the road. A regulation demands that in the case of an accident to a pedestrian the passenger, if there is one, shall hand the driver over to the nearest policeman,

and out of this regulation arose the unpleasant incident when the car in which the American Minister was riding three or four years ago knocked down an Abyssinian woman, but did not hurt her. The Minister, in accordance with the law, should have handed the driver over to the representative of the law near by, and walked home, or waited for another driver. But His Excellency did not see the fun of this, or thought he was above the law, so refused to hand over the driver and in the ensuing fracas was knocked down in the road! The American nation demanded an apology for this, and the Abyssinian army and police were assembled and marched past the spot on which Uncle Sam's representative made contact with Mother Earth, and on which he now stood to take the salute of the army and police. No cameras were allowed in the vicinity on this historic occasion.

A chief riding in his car has the attendants standing on the running-board and hanging on by their eye-brows. The Emperor, and the more important chiefs, have the proverbial State umbrellas held over them, the attendant riding in the "dickey" for this purpose. The Emperor has a Rolls-Royce with a dickey specially built for these umbrella-holders, with the result that the graceful lines of "the best car in the world" have been utterly spoiled. The natives themselves seem to be deaf, to contemplate suicide, or to indulge in a game of "last across" when they see a car approaching. They prefer the middle of the road to the side or pavement, and they cannot be blamed for this, seeing that the road is much smoother for their feet. Pedestrians will meet and embrace each other effusively in the middle of the road, regardless of all traffic. There were not many cars in Addis Ababa when we first went out and we had our share of disconcerting incidents and comical situations. On one occasion the carburettor of the taxi in which we were riding fell completely through the bottom! The driver calmly pro-

ceeded to walk back picking up the pieces as if he were used to it! We continued the journey on foot and the taxi caught us up some time after, the driver smiling at the joke. On another occasion, again in a hired car, whilst coasting down Entoto Hill, something like 2,000 feet, we noticed a very strong smell of rubber burning, and, when we had persuaded the driver to stop, we found that the brake-drums were almost red-hot and were practically innocent of grease. On our pointing this out to our worthy Jehu he produced a grease gun and with a show of knowledge he proceeded to apply the nozzle of the gun to the drums, whilst he actuated the button vigorously. On examination we found the gun quite empty, and questioning elicited the astounding information that it was being used to cool the drums.

Taxis were expensive, so we bought a car, and quite the most unpleasant incident we had was with our own car. We had been dining out at one of the legations, and fortunately were one of the first to leave, although it was in the small hours of the morning. The car suddenly stopped and my good man soon found out that the petrol tank was quite empty. We had a tin with us and the contents were poured into the tank—but there was no response from the engine. We turned the starting-handle until we were tired but still without the slightest result. In one of his walks round the car, in between his efforts at "mangling," my good man came across the chauffeur blowing vigorously down into the petrol tank, in an attempt to get the petrol into the auto-vac under the bonnet. There was still a chance that, if we could push the car a few yards, enough "juice" might be soaked up into the carburettor—so with me at the wheel, my husband and the driver pushed that car along the road, which was level just there fortunately. If they pushed a yard they must have pushed a quarter of a mile. Still no result and we abandoned the attempt. We were still some four miles

from home and walking at that time of the morning in evening clothes and thin slippers was ruled out, so we made ourselves comfortable in the back of the car—hoping that some one from the dinner would soon be coming our way and give us a lift. We were in a lonely part of the road, heavy growth and scrub on either side, and there wasn't a sound to be heard or a light to be seen.

After what seemed ages a car did put in an appearance, which we duly held up and were taken back home in time for a cup of tea. It was quite 10 o'clock before our own car turned up as the chauffeur had to walk into the town to get another car to tow ours in, and, as he explained, it went off under its own steam in less than half an hour. That chauffeur of ours was always a nightmare to me. He was an Arab from Aden, a giant of a man, and looked a brigand, especially when he put on his festive robes; however bad he might have been he was a good mechanic and had learned his engineering with the Army during the War. When we dined out he slept in the car, and as it was a saloon, he would have all the windows up, and create a "fug" with his cheap cigarettes, so that when we were going home it was necessary to open all the windows. The odour of cheap cigarettes combined with garlic was more than I could stand.

To return to our tour of the town. Abyssinians of importance are generally mounted on mules, and have a retinue, varying according to rank and wealth, running behind and armed with rifles of every make, bore and description, and heavy swinging swords. They spread themselves well across the road and make no effort to allow traffic to pass. Abyssinian ladies, too, may be seen on mules, with gaily coloured saddle-cloths and ornate head-stalls and reins. The fair (!) riders are held in the saddle by a servant whilst two or more retainers, fore and aft, are hanging on to the mule. Should the mule not like

the look of an approaching car and get restive all hands are requisitioned to control the animal and hold the rider in her saddle. Sometimes the lady decides she is safer on her feet, cramped as they might be by her tight, smart shoes; then her descent is more rapid than graceful. All Abyssinians are extremely courteous to one another, and there is much raising of hats, greetings, hand-shaking and kissing (even between the men), although they may be throwing stones at one another ten minutes after.

Native traders, from the interior, with their pack animals heavily laden with barley, coffee, hides and firewood, meander along, with much whacking of the animals, to their appointed markets or stop to greet a friend, or even to make a sale by the roadside. Donkeys are used chiefly (mules are too expensive), and these stagger along under their loads, sometimes a log of wood or baulk of timber oscillating between their ears and projecting three feet or more head and stern. It is no uncommon sight to see a donkey, overladen, protesting against the weight by lying down and then being raised bodily to his legs by those driving him. Should the donkey prove more obstinate than usual, and not get out of the way of traffic, the drivers will push him bodily over to one side. Most of the animals have terribly sore backs—nothing is done for them and with flies settling on the bleeding sores the sight is not a pleasant one and I could never get hardened to it.

Guragis (native head-porters) come staggering along with hides on their heads, or bales of cotton goods, or are perambulating hay-ricks. Women, bowed down with firewood, take their part in the procession.

There are cloth markets, wood markets, a hay market, and a vegetable market—all a mass of bartering, "smelly" humanity. Stalls and booths, by the roadside, display for sale old hats, garments of every kind and description; cakes of soap; old tin utensils; cheap and tawdry jewellery and bead necklaces. Old and discarded hats of

every description and age are prized, as although the highland Abyssinian has a thick mop of hair and probably a very thick skull, he is very susceptible to the sun and will cover his head with any protection he can get. The sight of a resourceful Abyssinian wearing as headgear a blue enamelled receptacle, generally seen only in bedrooms, brought tears of laughter to my eyes. He was a proud man and undoubtedly found the result wholly satisfactory. Hats are a joy to the Abyssinians! The owner of a skin, sheep's, leopard's or deer's, will meet a likely customer and there and then will spread the skin on the pavement or road for inspection and proceed to business.

Beggars crying for alms and exhibiting their infirmities may be seen on what is the sidewalk. There is a mute shapeless mass on that pile of stones—covered by a cloth. No, don't touch him, he is a leper in the most advanced stage of that foul disease.

Restaurants and cafés frequented by Greeks, Armenians and others of that ilk can be seen at some of the corners and appear to be well patronized.

There is no vivid colouring, however, in the streets or in the market-places, as may be seen in the bazaars in India and Egypt. The Abyssinian dresses in white, or what was white, and the men throw a "chamma" over their shoulders. These have deep red or blue fringes, the depth and colour denoting the affluence and allegiance to Emperor or Chief. In wet weather, or in the cool of the morning and evening, a "burnous" of dark brown felt-like material, with a projection to take the slung rifle, is worn, so that the general effect is more drab than picturesque.

CHAPTER THREE

IN the past little or nothing has been known of this delightful country Abyssinia, but since the Coronation in 1930 of the present Emperor Haile Sellassie the First it has been brought very much to the public notice, and recent events have served to make it more prominent. Off the beaten track, and difficult to get at, Abyssinia has been just a romantic name to the average person. It is indeed a strange country to this day, yet the oldest Christian State in Africa. Haile Sellassie the First, according to Ethiopian historians, is the 336th sovereign of that Empire, and as he has ruled since 1930, it is now the 6465th year of the reign of the Ethiopian Dynasty, which would make it the oldest royal house in the world.

It would be impossible to give a complete picture of the country—ranging as it does from plateaux 10,000 feet high to low, hot and sandy plains, and containing every kind of climate. Broadly speaking, Abyssinia may be described as a circular plateau surrounded on all sides by low, sandy and very hot deserts. On the east French Somaliland provides an outlet to the Red Sea; on the south by Italian Somaliland and Kenya; on the west by Anglo-Egyptian Sudan; and on the north by Eritrea (Italian), which also goes down to the Red Sea.

The country, as a whole, is a mass of mountains, chasms, ravines—a torn and riven jumble of peaks and cliffs and escarpments piled helter-skelter on a high table. So massive and grand is it that it wearies the eye and, after a time, gets on the nerves. It is strongly reminiscent of the North-west Frontier of India; and probably Thibet,

alone of all countries, is more mountainous. There are vast mountain ranges with peaks towering up to 12,000 and 13,000 and even 14,000 feet. It has been estimated that ninety per cent of the country lies at an altitude above 6,000 feet and eighty per cent above the 8,000-feet level.

At 8,000 feet the weather is delightful, fresh and breezy—hot in the sun, but cool in the shade and cold at night. Each 1,000-feet descent brings surprising differences in temperature. In the valleys and river bottoms the sun blazes down and the air is close, and conditions generally are far from pleasant, whilst the nights are by no means more comfortable. At the 8,000-feet line the climate is almost perfect and would be hard to beat in any part of the world; below 6,000 feet it is feverish. Flora and fauna change according to climate.

Although the country is generally mountainous, there are wide and extensive plateaux without chasms; for example Gojjom, Shoa, Arussi, and Sidamo contain comparatively level plains. On the Arussi plateau there is hardly a tree, hill or ravine—just a sea of grass. The rains are plentiful on this tableland, but, whilst there are no big rivers, there is abundance of water. The eastern termination of this plain is the great Arussi escarpment, which drops 4,000 feet suddenly. From here, looking back, the whole country appears like a giant's table. There is another plain in Shoa which is even more beautiful: large groves of trees, hills and valleys and water-courses delight the eye. The Gojjam plain is very similar, but perhaps more broken. North of Addis Ababa at a distance of only fifty miles lies the Mugger River. There are only two trails leading down from the plateau 4,000 feet above. It takes two days' heart-breaking work to cross; another three days' trek northwards and the Blue Nile is reached, a gash in the earth 6,000 feet deep.

The following is a typical "trek" in Abyssinia. From Addis Ababa take the train down to Modjo—three hours

away, and a drop of 2,000 feet or more. The paraphernalia and equipment for the trek have gone ahead and the man in charge has been commissioned to secure the necessary "salted" mules, as no animals can live in this country only a few days' march from Modjo—the "tsetse" fly is in evidence here. Rolling beautiful country is met with. There are many villages and a good deal of cultivation. Thorn bush is a nuisance. The camp on the south side of Harwash river is in a beautiful wide natural meadow; wild fig trees abound. At sunrise (when the camp is astir and preparing for an early start) the scene is beautiful in the extreme. On the next march to water one encounters cranes, herons, guinea fowls, ducks, geese, etc., and here camp on the Kallata River is pitched. A high divide nearly eight miles long breaks the country, necessitating rough going down lime rock, as a steep chasm has to be crossed. From the top one gets a view of a beautiful wide plain lying to the eastward and south with Sero in the distance, and apparently surrounded by a massive stone wall. The mountain to the south is Abasso—whilst that to the west is Chillalo. Come up Abasso if you want an energetic day. The lower slopes are gradual but the going higher up is rough. There are giant thistles and stunted cedars to be met. Nyala can also be met with at the altitude of 10,000 feet. The main ridge is here, with Abasso range in front, with the lordly main peak 13,050 feet standing up like a giant. The vegetation here is curious: evergreen trees, six to seven feet high, cover the spurs, ridges and ravines higher up. The peak itself is lost in the clouds. There is considerable rain, and it is cool even in the sun, whilst the nights are freezing. Game abounds—here may be seen reedbuck, dyker, bushbuck, oribi and other kinds which give too fleeting a glimpse to recognize. There on the east is Calup. Thick forest extends away to the south-east. Great trees cover the hillside from 9,000 to 11,000

feet—cedars with thirty to forty-foot bases, and thick grass, knee high, in between.

From here it takes five days to cross the great Arussi plains. There are no trees to be seen—it is just a sea of grass day after day. There is no game and birds are to be found only at waterholes. On the fifth day, however, the country changes: rolling country with groves of fig trees, valleys, ridges and streams. Reedbuck is also encountered again. A drop down of 4,000 feet to the river Wabhi Shebeh, the first thousand feet of which is almost vertical. The eastern edge of the Arussi escarpment to Wabhi is ten miles long, composed of nothing but rocks. Thornbush, cactus candelabra eight or nine feet high, and ant-hills twenty feet high, are scattered over the land, and the whole view is forbidding and grim. Eastward stands Mount Abu El Kassim, apparently desolation itself. Acres of black lava strike the eye. There is a steep trail down to the Wabhi. At the base of El Kassim lies an open forest where may be met monkeys, wart-hogs, dik-diks, etc. More lava rock is encountered between the Shenon River and the caravan route. From the Wabhi to the caravan route over the Tchercher mountains takes nine days steady trekking.

It will thus be seen that all sorts and conditions of terrain can be met with in Abyssinia. The true Abyssinian cannot be found on the outskirts of the capital, Addis Ababa, nor can the low hot fringes to the plateau be taken as typical of the country; the whole country can best be described as a high rocky giant's table. It is impossible to make marches of any length because of the difficulties of the country, deep ravines, and steep climbs. Distances covered in a day's trek appear infinitesimal upon the map.

It is not easy to describe the true Abyssinian, except that he is a highlander. The man from Galla is as

different from the Guragi or the Tigrian as the Somal is from the Sudanese. Every province seems to breed its own peculiar type, with one common trait, pride of race. The Abyssinians are tremendously proud, keen fighters and hunters; they greet you with an easy courtesy born of pride of birth and place. Upstanding, lithe and never tiring seemingly, they are one and all potential warriors. The average Abyssinian from the interior has not been used to luxuries—he can do with little in the way of food and clothes. These remarks do not apply, however, to the “townsman.” Ignorant, and suspicious of any foreigner, he delights in being insolent, especially to the white “maty.” The younger generation—especially some of those who have been abroad—are becoming insufferable. The young Abyssinian with a smattering of English or French has an exalted idea of his value and considers himself a finer and superior creature to others. He is quite “set-up” about it. His personal rights hang heavily upon his shoulders. He imagines he belongs to an unconquered race and considers himself fully equal, if not superior, to whites. It must be emphasized, however, that these criticisms apply only to the younger generation, and that, speaking broadly, there can be no complaint of any “anti-foreign” feeling. There have been isolated instances, but on investigation the “foreigner” has nearly always been at fault. I know that the Emperor has given instructions that severe measures are to be taken against any Abyssinian offending a foreigner, and any complaints are carefully investigated and appropriate punishment meted out. The older men are better and finer and have no lack of natural courtesy.

The Abyssinian must not be classed as a “negro”; in no sense, colouring, formation, facial features, can he be said to resemble the negroid type. The Emperor has at considerable expense to his private purse sent some of

the children of his advisers and friends to Europe and America for education. The European-trained youngster is a friend of the *Faranji*—not so the boy who has been to America. And, apropos of this, the following incident might be enlightening. On the polo ground an Englishman was explaining to a group of young Abyssinian boys the intricacies of the game, demonstration of strokes, riding off, etc., and his words and strokes were being followed with the greatest attention by all—except one. This exception soon left the group and wandered off to a distant part of the field where he soon had an admiring audience of young urchin Abyssinians round him. The Italian Minister happened to ride by, and was greeted respectfully by all—except the boy on the pony. The discourtesy was so marked that the Minister thought it could not be overlooked, and called the young man's attention to the oversight. He was met with the reply: "This is not your country and I will say good afternoon to whom I like." The Minister rode on, and the young Abyssinian cantered over to the Englishman and, seething with temper and resentment at the well-deserved rebuke to his lack of courtesy, said he was going to report the matter to the Emperor. The Englishman tried to pacify the boy, and forgot all about the incident as being trivial and an empty threat. But subsequent events proved the opposite. The boy reported the incident to the Emperor, who at once remedied the matter by banishing him from Addis Ababa. The Englishman learned later that the boy had been educated in America, and, due to the treatment he had received whilst in that country, had developed an anti-foreign complex.

As a contrast, an English lady whilst riding out alone on the outskirts of the town was thrown from her pony, broke her arm and was rendered unconscious. An elderly Abyssinian from a near-by tumbledown *tukhul* saw the accident, and did all in his power to help. With the aid

of the native *tej* he brought the lady back to consciousness, caught her pony and, with as many other Abyssinian men and women as he could muster, put her back in the saddle. He held her in the saddle and walked, and generally made her as comfortable as possible. He saw her back to her house, more than five miles away, and refused to accept any sort of payment for his services, or for the trouble he had taken.

There is an unpleasant trait to the Abyssinian, his love of useless talk. He delights in argument and will drop whatever he may be doing to take part in a senseless wrangle, although he may not in any way be concerned in the dispute. The people are fond of litigation, and will on the slightest pretext resort to the wayside court. Two Abyssinians may not agree over the matter of the sale of an old hat. "In the name of Haile Sellassie" they will call upon the first person going by—an Abyssinian—to act as judge. In all solemnity the "judge" will take his seat by the roadside, call upon other passers-by to sit as jurors, and proceed to hear the merits of the case, from the very start and in the minutest detail. The prosecutor and accused, with much declaiming and gesticulation, give their version amidst the crowd that has quickly gathered. The case seems interminable, but the judge and jury show no impatience, and in due course—it may have taken some hours—will arrive at their verdict, which is generally accepted by the parties in the case, and the crowd breaks up, the prosecutor and accused walking off the best of friends and mutually pleased with each other.

The Abyssinians, free men, hate manual work, or, for that matter, work of any kind. All the field work—ploughing, harvesting, etc.—is done by slaves, whilst female slaves carry the water in hand-made pitchers and kerosene tins, hew the wood, grind the spice, and do all the hard work. On the other hand, the men do all the sewing.

The true Abyssinian is a fine figure of a man, erect,

sturdily built, and with a free, easy gait. His colouring is a pale chocolate, with almost true typical Greek features, surmounted by a mop of black tightly curled hair. In the lowlands all smear their heads with unclarified butter or rancid fat as a protection against the sun. The heads of the young children provide materials for their parents to vent their artistic tastes. The head is nearly completely shaven except for fantastic fringes, geometrical designs of every kind, or perhaps merely a cock's comb left. The first appearance of these highly tonsured heads is unique, and many a smile is raised by the designs created.

It is at first difficult to distinguish the sexes, until one realizes that the women under their long garments are wearing the trousers. The pure Abyssinian woman, with her long face, thick lips, high forehead and woolly hair, does not make a prepossessing picture. The Galla woman, on the other hand, is passably good looking and in some cases quite pretty, according to European standards. The women, too, dress their hair in fantastic manners. The average woman in Abyssinia keeps her hair comparatively short but combed up from the forehead until it is massed on top of her head and resembles a mass of black crinkly wool. The fashionable, however, will go to some pains—literally—to dress her hair. One woman acts as hairdresser to another. They will sit for hours plaiting the hair as tightly as possible into a number of small plaits which cling closely to the head, and smeared over with rancid fat. Often you will find a round patch shaved on the top of the head—rather different from the European who tries to conceal the bald patch on the head. The implements used are primitive, often just a piece of broken glass, or with the aid of horse clippers.

The men wear a form of Jodhpur breeches, very tight from the knees down to the ankle, but the seat very

loose and baggy hanging well down at the back almost to the knees; a coat with tight sleeves; whilst flung over the shoulder is the inevitable "chamma," worn by both men and women. The women wear loose-legged trousers, under a loose sack-like garment which, originally white in colour, is allowed to become grey-black before the owner dreams of washing it—and will then probably call upon her male relatives to do the washing. Soap is a luxury and water scarce, yet the Abyssinian will wash his hands, feet and head as often as possible. At one time the Abyssinian firmly believed that the European was white by the use of soap, and even to-day soap is a highly valued gift.

The inhabitant has no idea of a luxurious life; his wants are few, and, as he dislikes work, he will not do more than to keep body and soul together. If he has any land he tills and cultivates just enough to provide for the necessities of life and to pay the taxes demanded by the Lord of the District: His argument is that if he works hard and makes the land yield more the lord will take more, so why work more than absolutely necessary? Outside the town of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa the people live in grass or mud huts, clustered on tops of hills, and share their dwelling-place with their fowls, their donkeys or mules and oxen. It is only among the richer class, or among the servants employed by Europeans in the towns, that beds are to be found, made out of rawhide thongs.

The people are not immoral—they lack morals. The marriage customs are repugnant. An Abyssinian will pay a dollar to a woman who will come along, bringing her own mattress, and live with him as his wife. So long as he treats her decently she will stay by him. As soon as she has had enough of that particular man she will move off, taking her children with her. Her man will do the same—he will dispense with her whenever he

thinks fit; and should he at any time in the future require another "wife" he knows he can get one for the asking and at the cost of a dollar. The result is that venereal disease is rife, and families small. The Abouna (Archbishop) is trying his best to remedy these beastly "marriage" customs, but so far his efforts have been in vain. The richer and educated classes are helping, and it is now accepted that when a couple are married in a church or by a priest the marriage is binding and there can be no more "philandering."

By Abyssinian law a woman can inherit and possess property exactly on the same lines as men, and with equal rights. This is, no doubt, one reason why Abyssinian women are so independent in their family lives.



(Above) "Tommy Boy"—the author's first purchase
(Below) Horses about to swim the river on the way to Mulu



The Abyssinian sunshade—swank—not protection



An Abyssinian child—dressed to kill and proudly posing

CHAPTER FOUR

THERE is nothing leonine about the Emperor of Abyssinia, Haile Seilassie the First, King of Kings, Conquering Lion of Judah.

About 44 years of age, he is slight in build and below middle height, with delicate handsome features and a complexion of dark-brown ivory, and with the black-bearded profile of a Pharaoh.

He claims descent from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and is proud of his line of fighting ancestors and his warlike people.

A great-nephew of the Emperor Menelik the Second, he has reached his position partly by inheritance, more by a combination of good fortune, ability and energetic courage, physical and moral.

His appointment in 1916 as Regent followed the successful rebellion he headed against the misrule of Lij Yassu, grandson of the Emperor Menelik the Second. Abyssinia, as a Christian country, disliked the tendency towards Mohammedanism exhibited by their Emperor Lij Yassu, and when the present Emperor as Ras Taffari, as he was then, headed the rebellion, encouraged by France and Great Britain, he found the whole country on his side and his overthrow of Lij Yassu was complete, the Empress Zaiditu being placed on the throne while he, Ras Taffari, was elected Regent.

As Regent, Taffari ruled with success warlike and ambitious chieftains, who as rivals for the throne were prepared to set up in opposition. The Regent defied convention and came to Europe in 1924, in spite of his uncertainty of the attitude of these rival chiefs and the

probability that his absence for some time from the country might jeopardize his ascent to the throne. He, however, compelled a dozen of the most lawless of these worthies to accompany him on the journey to Europe. This astute move caused these chiefs to forgo an ambitious programme of rapine and plunder. He visited England during this journey, where he made a good impression.

In 1928 he forced the hand of the Empress Zaiditu. Surrounded by priests as the Empress was, the Regent could not get any of his plans for the advancement of the country carried through, the priests by their hold on the Empress advising her that the schemes were impracticable, the country not ripe for any improvement, the people resenting the idea of any "foreign" innovations and intrusions, and generally obstructing, condemning and damning any development suggested by the Regent. The position was impossible, and one day in September matters came to a head. Nobody knows exactly what actually took place, but those who were in Addis Ababa know that once again essential proposals made by the Regent had been put aside. The Regent's patience was exhausted; the Palace was surrounded by his troops in order that he should get his proposals accepted. These, in turn, were surrounded by the army of the Empress, and this might have gone on indefinitely—but, as told in the capital, Taffari held the trump ace in the form of two tanks presented by Italy. With these he demanded admittance to the Palace, threatening to break the gates down with the tanks if admittance were not granted to him. Whatever truth there may be in the rumour, it is an indisputable fact that following hard upon the incident Ras Taffari was proclaimed king. In November, 1928, he was crowned as such, the ceremony being held in the early hours of the morning in the presence of all available chiefs, senior members of the Government and the Diplomatic Corps. It was not a long or impres-

sive ceremony, and gave the impression of being hurried and secretive. The actual crowning took place in a small tent which was strictly guarded and to which only the very high dignitaries of the State were admitted. It is said that the Empress with her own hands placed the crown upon Taffari's head, thus assigning away her Sovereignty and granting to Taffari equal rights and power. Henceforth the Empress Zaiditu was merely a figurehead.

Taffari's power and driving force now became increasingly apparent. A ready imitator of things European, and especially enamoured with modern militarism, he set about consolidating his position. He soon had a small army round him, chosen for their allegiance to his person and drilled by Belgian officers, a Mission being especially selected by Belgium for this purpose. This small army, clothed in decent uniforms, armed and equipped with modern weapons, was soon welded into shape, and the cavalry, with gay fluttering pennons, were workmanlike. Discipline, drilling and regular payment to the ranks were insisted upon from the outset, and the drill grounds were always thronged with curious sightseers and recruits were easily obtained. Taffari was not emulating Ammanullah of Afghanistan by thrusting reforms down the throats of the people. "*Kus-kus*" (slowly) was the motto of the new King in making innovations. Government Departments were being looked into and properly organized, inquiries were being made into the possibility of improving the finances of the country and generally there was an undercurrent of optimistic feeling that, at long last, much needed development and reforms would materialize. King Taffari was bold enough to purchase one or two French aeroplanes and to secure the services of a competent French pilot. Then another plane appeared on the scene, this time German, with two German pilots, both young titled men. The Empress, on the advice of

her priests, would not have anything to do with these inventions of the devil. Opposition to Taffari as King had been expected, but he was slowly preparing to meet and quash any serious opposition with the aid of his 'planes and well drilled and decently equipped little force of soldiers. Outwardly there was little or no change, and the King was to be seen frequently in the town seeing for himself the small reforms, improvements, etc., he had initiated in the capital. Foreign advisers too had been appointed and were quietly appearing. An Englishman had been secured for the Ministry of the Interior, an American for Finance, and a Swede for Foreign Affairs. There was some little talk in the bazaars—but the excitement died away.

In April, 1930, the bombshell fell: the Empress was suddenly taken ill one night. Her French doctor was hurriedly summoned. Before he could arrive, however, the priests, in personal attendance upon the Empress, had taken charge and advised a bath in "holy water." Her Majesty had been a sufferer from diabetes for a long time. The effect of the immersion, at that height, in cold water could have but one end, and Her Majesty passed peacefully away before the arrival of the doctor. King Taffari was in attendance—it is not known whether he was with his cousin in her last moments—and simultaneously with the public announcement of the death of Her Majesty the Empress came the announcement of King Taffari's succession as Emperor of Abyssinia.

The burial of the Empress was quiet and with almost indecent haste, but at that height there is the least possible delay between death and interment. Her Majesty was laid to rest in Menelik's Tomb, within the precincts of the Palace.

Ras Taffari had now achieved his ambition, and speculation was rife as to what use he would make of the power now in his hands. Would he use it for his personal

aggrandisement, or for the progress of his country? Time alone can give the answer to this. There would appear to be no question as to his aim for personal wealth, as he is reputed to have inherited a fortune from both Menelik and the Empress Zaiditu. The education in Europe and America of sons of his faithful retainers and advisers, and the cost of the schools in Addis Ababa, are borne out of his private purse, whilst it is also said that the enormous cost of his coronation in 1930 did not fall upon his country or the State revenues.

Due to his travels, contact with the outer world, and unabated interest in the affairs of the various European nations, he should certainly be the best-informed and most broad-minded ruler that his empire has yet known. However broad-minded he may be, with inclinations towards aeroplanes, the League of Nations, and the progress of science, is he strong enough to overcome the traditions of his country and change the feudal outlook of his people, demanding, as this does, the strict observance of those strange rites and customs that belong to a thousand years ago? For it is still a country where Coptic Christianity is jostled with paganism, civilization by barbarism, and motor-cars by transport camels and mules, and where banditry is a vocation and slave-raiding across the borders a popular pastime.

The Ethiopian Government is still purely feudal, but the Emperor is supreme, the various Rases (chiefs) acknowledging their fealty to him and contributing their share towards the expenses of governing. The smaller chiefs in turn acknowledge the overlords of their districts, whilst the common people pay tithes in kind (usually one-tenth of what they raise), and in case of war support their immediate chiefs. The result is weakness, as the people of a province are answerable only to their local chief and do not recognize the central authority. The Emperor's writ does not run to all parts of his Empire.

Alien governors of provinces have been appointed by the Emperor, but, although this may be some check, the way is still open to trouble as the hereditary chiefs are beloved and followed by people of their provinces. These chiefs must be conciliated and at the same time kept in hand by quick and early show of "force," and this can only be achieved by the establishment of every kind of communication and roads, and more roads, linking up every part of his extended empire. He must be strong enough to impose his will upon a recalcitrant chief, to put down raiding and to clear his people of maintaining slavery and trafficking in human beings. He rules over a people who, after an isolation of a thousand years, walled about on every side by Mohammedanism, have yet kept steadfastly Christian.

He has decreed gradual emancipation of the slaves in his country, and slave-trading itself is punishable by death. Domestic slavery, however, is still a recognized institution and practised in a beneficent form. With the liberation of slaves, unemployment, as known in Europe, will be an insoluble question to a country like his, without industries or other means of absorbing the labour that will necessarily be thrown on the open market. Abyssinia in itself is not a wealthy country as yet, and the private purse of its ruler cannot be expected to guard against the poverty of the people that must follow.

He has striven to modernize the political institutions of the country, and granted a Constitution in 1931 and established two Houses of Parliament to carry this through. It is still too early to say that it is functioning to its fullest extent. One of the first duties the new Houses were called upon to carry out was in connection with the trial of Ras Hailu, King of Gojjam, in 1932. Hailu was mixed up in the abortive attempt of Lij Yassu, the former Emperor, to escape. Hailu was known to have many friends and followers in the House and who

would have sided with him if matters had turned out otherwise. As it was, Hailu hadn't a friend in the House at his trial—some of his friends [*sic*] even went so far as to demand his death in boiling wax! Hailu, with Lij Yassu, has been deprived of his title and his property, and he has been banished with imprisonment for life.

Haile Sellassie is a champion of the younger generation, but he still has to contend with the followers of the old school who are bitterly opposed to reforms of any kind, to whom civilization is anathema and who are obstructionists of the very worst kind to progress and development. In spite of the obstacles in his path the Emperor has established hospitals and schools and has improved the streets in the capital, but there is still a lot to do, more perhaps than can be accomplished in his lifetime. The purging of the Government departments, whose officials, from highest to lowest, are ever open to bribery and corruption, and the dismissal of sycophants and worthless so-called "advisers"—adventurers who have left their country for their country's good, and who have domiciled themselves in Abyssinia—call for immediate and ruthless action.

He has declared his intention of developing the vast natural resources of his country and to welcome engineers, industrialists, bankers and others with the assurance that they would receive every facility for their work and the most favourable pecuniary inducements. To this end he must rid himself of the taint of commercialism and "scotch" the rumour that he derives pecuniary advantages from the salt monopoly, the import of corrugated iron and petrol, or that he is in any way financially interested in motor-cars, motor transport, etc. Concessions for gold-mining have been granted; but there have been secret agreements behind the concessions, all to the advantage of the Emperor, so it is said. Where he has appointed European advisers to his ministries he must see their

reports find their way to him and are not pigeon-holed by the officials of the departments, and that the recommendations made by the advisers are given effect to. Capitalists and industrialists must be attracted, but they must be given security, not only of their persons, but of the capital invested by them and the capacity of their investments to earn a return.

Ruling Abyssinia, welding the provinces into one homogeneous whole, maintaining peace within its borders, converting anti-foreign spirits, steering clear of entanglements with European countries, requires a diplomat of the first calibre. Haile Sellassie has shown that he has the necessary qualifications, and everyone who has met the Emperor and knows his country must wish him well.

Recent events, however, must have convinced him that the old isolation is impossible, even if membership of the League of Nations means little or nothing to his country. If called upon to defend his country against a modern invader, seeking new lands for her excess population, and armed and equipped with modern artillery, machine-guns and aeroplanes, the result would be a dismal surprise to every Abyssinian left, from the highest to the lowest. The country is a natural fortification and may be self-supporting, but it is very vulnerable and could be easily isolated. With the railway cut the outlet to the sea would be blocked; one of the most fertile provinces in the South occupied with little or no opposition; the towns, etc., bombed and razed to the ground; and generally the country forced to accede to the demands of the invader. With the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan on the west, Uganda and Kenya on the south, and British Somaliland on the east, it would appear that Great Britain could best fill the role of "best friend." Great Britain can have no territorial interest in the country—she has enough overseas possessions—and her only

interests would be the preservation of the water supply from Lake Tsana to the Nile (so essential to the Sudan and Egypt), the independence of Abyssinia, peace and order on the borders, and a cessation of slave-raiding across the borders into her territories. Naturally she would require something tangible in return—perhaps the railway extended from Dire Dawa, via Harrar, to Zeila. This would give Abyssinia an alternative route to the sea, and would afford an excuse to Great Britain to restore Zeila to its former importance. Zeila, with little expenditure, offers the same facilities as Djibouti, and is capable of being made into a good harbour and port for ocean-going steamers.

Little is known of the private life of the Emperor, except that he is an early riser and an indefatigable worker. Although he has various Ministries with responsible officials at the head, he is kept conversant with everything that is happening and his decision asked for. Granting audiences to his ministers, attending to affairs of State, seeing personally to reforms, improvements, etc., the Emperor is a busy man.

The Empress Waziru seems wrapped in mystery, and is seldom seen in public. She is a plump little woman of Circassian complexion. By her present husband, the Emperor, she has six children, three sons and three daughters, the last being born in 1931. The girls have been educated in England and Switzerland. I was not in Addis Ababa when the last boy was born, but my good man was, living with a bachelor friend in the centre of the town. His host was out, and whilst he was reading after dinner, enjoying a night-cap before retiring, a sudden fusillade of shots rang out. The firing continued and got worse, and, as he was acting as correspondent for a news agency and there was trouble in the air, he went out into the compound to see what it was all about. The servants had congregated and were taking shelter

behind a stone wall and beseeched my husband to take cover. He recognized the old familiar sound—the ping of bullets as they went over. Curiosity got the better of him and he ventured out into the road, where large numbers were collecting. A German, however, gave him the news, and would not allow him to go any farther, as in their excitement anything might happen; so he took him in and produced whisky-and-sodas and the birth of another son to the Emperor was duly celebrated. The crowd, as usual in this part of the world and Arabia, were celebrating by discharging their rifles; and if a cartridge contained a bullet, why, so much the better; and if anybody were hit nobody could say where the bullet came from, and a good many bullets were in consequence whistling over the compound.

CHAPTER FIVE

I FIRMLY believe that if it had not been for my saving sense of humour I should have left the country a week after I had arrived in it and had to take over housekeeping. We were fortunate enough in having a furnished bungalow, complete in every respect, placed at our immediate disposal, and we drove to our new home straight from the station and were installed there and then. Our hostess had been in residence for some six months and had collected a staff of servants who were willing to stay on under the new "matey" (mistress), so that was something to be thankful for. Our hostess, however, was leaving next morning for the interior, and, although we were tired and longed for bed, it was up to me to learn all I could from her as to the methods of running a house in Abyssinia, the duties of the various servants, their names and wages, the marketing, price of commodities, grocers, etc. As can be imagined, our first night was a short but hectic one and my head was "buzzing"; I was short of sleep too.

Most of the houses are of the bungalow type—I would not trust my life on a second floor—and all the roof timbering is left bare. To overcome the unsightliness *aboujedid* (a cheap sort of drill) is stretched tight across each room and painted over with oil paint. Most of the ceilings are just plain white, but I have seen some fantastic designs and wonderful pictures painted on some of the ceiling cloths. It is astonishing how effectively they fulfil their purpose and how durable they are. A strong wind generally springs up at night, and, as the tops of the bungalows are anything but weather-tight,

the wind screeches through the bungalow and lifts all the ceiling cloths. They blow out like sails and then come back again with an awful "flop," like a revolver-shot. The ceiling cloth in our bedroom kept this up all night and I simply could not get to sleep. It takes some time before one gets used to these sudden noises.

Early next morning—oh, the treat to get fresh milk again in our tea!—we accompanied our hostess to the top of Mount Entoto, where she was to meet the rest of her party and from where the "trek" was to start; and, as it was 2,000 feet higher up and seven miles away, the journey to the top of the mountain was done by car, and I got my first motoring thrills. My first view of the country from 10,000 feet high was lovely and I am not likely to forget it. Down at our feet lay Addis Ababa in a mist and buried in eucalyptus, and beyond stretched a vast plain ending in a dim distant range of mountains, amongst which Mount Zekewala was pointed out to me. On the other side of Entoto as far as the eye could see lay another plain, across which the trek was to be made and which ended, so I was told, at the Blue Nile. I longed to be going on the trek too, but was consoled by the thought that we should be doing the journey ourselves in the near future. We looked on with interest at the assembly of the party, the riding ponies and mules, the pack animals and the despatch ahead of the camping kit; and when the caravan had, at last, moved on we reluctantly tore ourselves from the scene and returned home for a somewhat delayed breakfast. Orders had already been given by our hostess that we should require lunch, so after a change and something to eat we motored off again into the town to see where the office was and for my husband to meet his staff and to get hold of an interpreter if possible. Neither my husband nor I knew a word of the servants' language, and they did not know—at least, did not recognize—my husband's Arabic. We

found the office housed in a somewhat pretentious building, which I discovered had been used in the past by an Englishman as a dwelling-house, and as the bungalow we were in was something like five miles away and motor-ing would, I saw, produce nervous prostration I made up my mind that we would move as soon as we could, but not a word of this did I mention to my good man. Whilst he was looking over the office side I busied myself in going over the house and gauging its possibilities as a residence combined with office. We took the senior assistant back with us to the bungalow, where we paraded the servants. The house-boy, we said, would be head boy. He promptly gave notice to leave, and we could not ascertain the reason. It was not for some time after did we find out why we were up against "one man one job," and the house-boy would not accept the responsibilities of a head boy. Our mistake number one.

It was this very house-boy who turned out later to be my right hand and an Admirable Crichton. In days to come he acted as *dhobie* (washerman) and valet to my husband. He filled the gap when I was left without a cook or he (the cook) had gone "on drink." Many a time has he acted as my personal *syce*, and during a very serious illness I was unlucky to contract he acted as my nurse. For six weeks he slept outside my bedroom door so as to be within call, and when my poor husband was fagged out with nursing me Oondie actually fed me. Should my husband for any reason not wear the clothes, tie, etc., Oondie had set out for him he sulked for the rest of the day and my husband had to pacify him. I have a soft corner in my heart for Oondie—the perfect "boy," as he became known in Addis Ababa. Although he turned out to be such a good boy he gave us many anxious moments in the beginning of his career with us. It was on our third night in the country and we had a guest in to dinner. Oondie was acting as "house-boy"

and *dhobie*, and attended to us at meals. The kitchen was quite a short distance from the house—and there was a small veranda in front of the house leading to the dining-room. There seemed to be a hitch in the proceedings and the meat course was unusually long in appearing—when there was a sudden crash on the veranda. Oondie, rather three sheets in the wind, had tripped over the steps and had measured his length on the veranda. The beef and vegetables went flying. Oondie picked up what he could see and very sedately, treading quickly, walked into the room and proceeded to allow me to help myself—the dish had been picked up and the meat put on it upside down! My consternation was exceeded by my amusement—and we all pretended that it was nothing unusual, our guest acting bravely as if it were an everyday occurrence. Gradually Oondie learned our little ways and idiosyncrasies and took over full responsibility for the running of the house and staff—but we always had to make allowances for his “drunks.” These drunks were not frequent on his part, and were overlooked, as drinking was and is the only pleasure the Abyssinian has in life. He has no smart restaurants, cafés, theatres, or cinemas to beguile him, and his native drinks are cheap. We found that none of our servants, although they had free access to our whisky, etc., ever helped themselves to the *Faranji* drinks, but preferred their own. *Tej* is made from fermented honey, and when clarified has a similar appearance—golden, sparkling—to champagne; *talla* is brewed from barley and is like beer. Both drinks are exceedingly cheap, and in the interior *talla* is six “horns” (cups) to a pesa—a thirty-second of a dollar, worth about 1s. 6d. and in the town four horns. Oondie, when he had been imbibing too liberally, and was serving us with drinks, was a sight for the gods, and brought my heart to my mouth; tacking, swaying, “swinging in the breeze” and with the tray at an angle he would fetch up

at his destination with not a drop spilled from the glasses ! How he did it I do not know, but I cannot remember a single occasion when he spilled the drinks. We were out very frequently, especially at "sun-downer" time, and we had instructed Oondie that, according to the time of day, refreshments was to be offered, tea at eleven in the morning and again from four to six in the afternoon and whisky-and-soda, or a short drink, at other times. One afternoon some lady missionaries called on us about 6.30, but unfortunately we were out. They were duly offered tea, but, as they had already partaken, they refused and said they would wait. After a short interval, Would they take a whisky-and-soda? No, they wouldn't. After another short interval—would they like a short drink or a cocktail?—and received the same reply. He was not to be daunted, but was not going to let the prestige of the house down. To his relief, and that of our visitors, we arrived on the scene—to find a very perplexed servant and somewhat bewildered visitors. When our visitors had left Oondie came along, and with a very hang-dog air told us he had offered nearly everything drinkable, but, strange to say, the ladies would not take anything. It was difficult to get him to understand that lady missionaries were staunch teetotallers, and we abandoned the attempt to explain to him to whom drinks should be offered in future.

It must not be thought from what I have written above that we were too lenient in our dealings with our servants, or that we condoned their drinking. I think I can safely say, and with pride, that I had the most efficient staff in any private household in Abyssinia: my servants were loyal—they one and all returned to me when I came back after leave; the house was spotlessly clean and ran on oiled wheels; and—in spite of what I had been told about the thieving propensities of the Abyssinian servants—we never lost anything by theft.

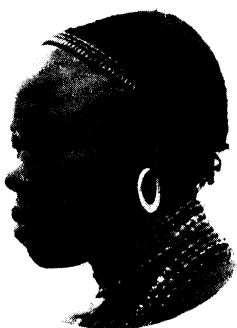
We treated our servants as rational human beings; were considerate to them as regards pay, hours, leave, etc., and finally we were just—or tried to be. I found I was perfectly capable of dealing with their usual shortcomings and controlling them. In very few cases did I call upon my husband to use a heavy hand. I would have nothing to do with the silly habit of fining the servants if they did anything wrong. At first I was compelled to resort to this—but I did it only two or three times. I was punctilious in seeing that they were paid at the end of each month. Each servant was paid in the presence of the others, with my head boy as witness. If a fine had to be deducted it was done so, and the whole staff taken to a deep disused well into which I threw the value of the fine in cash, thus showing to the offender and others that I was not benefiting my own pocket when inflicting a fine. The effect was very salutary.

Before Oondie was promoted, our first head boy was a gentleman by the name of Eric—a released slave who had been to a mission school, and spoke English! He died whilst in our service, and after his death I resolved never again to have an English-speaking or mission-educated servant. Missions in Abyssinia, as in other parts of the world, undoubtedly do a great deal of good, but they do not turn out decent servants. I have every respect and admiration for missions and missionaries, but I wish they would realize that the boys and girls they bring up do not make suitable servants—for English people at any rate. In very few cases are they taught a trade, so they resort to domestic service, relying on their ability to speak English. Their defects as servants outweigh the advantage of being able to give orders in English. I am not alone in holding this opinion of a mission-educated boy.

We supplied the uniforms for the house servants and the syces (grooms), and insisted on these uniforms being kept clean, we supplying the soap. As soap is a luxury



Abyssinian chiefs in full war regalia



Six typical Abyssinian women's heads and unique dressings

and sought after by the Abyssinian, there was no difficulty in maintaining a high standard of cleanliness of the uniforms. I also made it a rule that every servant should report immediately if he was ill or hurt. I rendered first aid or called in a doctor or sent the patient to hospital. After Eric's death, when making an inspection of the hut in which Eric had lived, we found, to our horror, that the thermogene supplied and intended for Eric was being worn by his wife as a bodice—and very proud she was of it, too! We also found that the medicines given by the doctor had never been given to the patient and were hidden away in a corner. The expenses of Eric's funeral were small, but the "wake" that followed became quite an expensive affair for us. This was a largely attended ceremony, and included *three* of the deceased's "cast-off" wives.

Eric had died comparatively "well off" as a boy. His belt, an ornate affair, contained 100 cartridges or more and represented more than \$100; and was given to me by his mother for safe keeping. Soon after the funeral the mother came along and claimed the belt, saying she required the money to pay the priests for their prayers to get Eric out of purgatory. It appeared from what she told me that the Abyssinian soul went into purgatory for a period of forty days, out of which he had to be prayed; there was another stage from which he had again to be succoured; and then at intervals of a year he was prayed for until his soul reached the seventh heaven of delight. At each stage the priests offered prayers—on payment; and Maggie, the mother, told me all poor Eric's wealth would be required for the first two stages. Rather a lucrative profession for the priests I thought at the time.

I like to look back and think that our servants were satisfied, and I hope loyal; and that they were happy many small incidents proved to me. The dining-room and sitting-room had polished floors, and the two

houseboys were inordinately proud of the state in which they kept these floors. Every morning the two of them, with their toes through the straps of horse "body brushes" (specially provided), polished these floors until they "shone with a silky shine." They thoroughly enjoyed this part of their day's work, using the floor as a skating rink; and often, on my way to the bath, I have peeped in and seen them doing their "turn" to the admiration of the other servants. My floors were admired—and dreaded—by my friends.

It would be idle to pretend that there were not rows between the servants themselves. There were, but all concerned took care to keep away from the house; if they brought the quarrel too near the appearance of "matey" a stamp of her foot whilst she shouted "*Zimbal!*" (keep quiet) was sufficient to quell the disturbers. To this was due a very strange dinner we gave once. It was just before the "cocktail hour," and I had made my usual inspection of the table and its appointments and was seeing there was sufficient drink for the evening, when I heard a most unholy squabble going on in the pantry between the cook and the head house-boy. What the cause of the trouble was I didn't know and didn't care, but I was not going to have a row when I was giving a dinner. The guests arrived in due course, and Oondie, although rather excited and wild in the eye—he had had one or two too many, probably to carry him through the ordeal of a *burra khana* (big dinner)—served the drinks perfectly, dinner was punctually announced by him, and we trooped in. There was a short delay—and then, to my amazement, instead of hors d'œuvres being served first, an iced pudding was offered to the guests. I looked round the table, but everyone was taking it as a perfectly natural proceeding. In short, the whole dinner was served backwards and we ended with the "hors d'œuvres." As soon as we realized what was

happening we all broke into peals of laughter, my guests not accepting any explanation I offered, but thinking it was some bright new idea of mine. The evening was a very gay one, but the incident was remembered long after. I found next day, on investigation, that the cook resented Master Oondie's interference in the kitchen and to get a score off him had served the dinner backwards.

I was helping my husband in the office and my mornings were fully occupied, so my "housekeeping" was brought down to essentials and appeared to be somewhat perfunctory. It was only occasionally, on Sundays and holidays, that I was able to indulge in "elevenses." This was an institution, imported from Egypt, I believe, where we few English women went round to one another's houses at about eleven in the morning for a cup of tea and a chat between ourselves with no men folk hanging around. There was little or no gossip; we all knew each other's doings and our lives were practically open books to each other, so that there was no opportunity of making scandals. We were very generous towards each other in exchanging papers, books, flowers, and in this small community no one could afford to fall out.

The house was kept spotlessly clean, I could take visitors into the kitchen at any time (wonder of wonders!). The furniture and silver were always polished. I gave orders, issued stores, and Oondie saw to the rest. In spite of the good advice tendered me that all Abyssinian servants were thieves, I often found I had given Oondie the keys of my store cupboard, and I can say with truth that there were never any stores missing, nor for that matter did we ever miss anything, and we left everything open! Naturally we left no temptation in the way of the servants—I don't at home, and I wasn't going to do it in Abyssinia. Of course I knew that we were keeping the staff supplied with tea, sugar, and coffee, but we expected this and allowed for the extra cost in our budget expenses.

On comparing notes with a similar English household, where the keys were rigidly kept by the "matey," and a bachelor establishment of one, I found that our expenses were not any more, if anything less, although the standard of living was the same.

Gradually my household were settling down and realizing that they were being put on their honour, and right gallantly did they play up.

I made no serious attempt to learn Amharic, the language used in the capital, and found I got along beautifully with the few words I picked up for household purposes. Fortunately we had a groom who had been employed by the British Legation and whilst there had learned sufficient Hindustani to be able to carry on a conversation in it, and as my husband spoke this fluently it was a medium to use when giving any complicated orders. Arabic was also understood to some extent, and the *gatea* was able to air his knowledge of this also. Amharic had some very euphonious and easily remembered words—*naga*, to-morrow; *zimbal*, shut up; *aow*, yes; *tholabul*, fast; *kus-kus*, slow; and I was soon able to ring the changes on these few, and similar, words. The cook went to market daily and came to me to learn what we would like in the way of vegetables, holding up each article and pronouncing the name in Amharic so that I could repeat it after. My vocabulary was increased considerably in this somewhat primitive Pelman method. I often fell into traps, and the consternation on the face of the cook can be imagined when I asked for *dimmat* (cat) instead of *dinnic* for potatoes. However, with a smattering of Amharic and Arabic and a few words of Hindustani I got on very well, and generally succeeded in making myself understood. Addis Ababa was a wonderful place to learn languages in—badly. There were at least seven different languages and dialects spoken in my husband's office, and I remember distinctly one occasion

when an Italian called on my husband on business. The Italian knew his own language and Amharic. Most of the staff had left the office for lunch, so the conversation was conducted through Italian to one who translated it into Amharic, to another who finally translated it into English for the benefit of my husband. Strange to say, the business was concluded to the satisfaction of all concerned. As I have said, Amharic was used only in Addis Ababa; just outside the capital Galla was more universally spoken, whilst on the railway Arabic was most frequently heard. It was all very disconcerting at first, but I soon fell into the habit of using my few words of Amharic, Arabic, Hindustani—with a good sprinkling of English. I would not learn Amharic, as I was—and still am—of the opinion that less respect was paid by the Abyssinians to “mateys” who could speak their language. My women friends who had gone to the trouble of learning the language admitted this. When we first arrived in the country English was spoken, or understood, in very few of the shops, but when I left the country I could go into any of the bigger shops and order what I required in English. There was no delight in shopping in Addis Ababa, but I did like “prowling” about the smaller shops, especially the “thieves’ bazaar”—booths run by Somalis—seeing what I could pick up in the way of curios. I always had to have a servant in attendance, not only to interpret but for my protection. There was one shop, however, that I did delight in visiting, and that was the grocer’s we patronized. It was a veritable Whiteley’s in miniature, and I could purchase almost anything there, from most expensive French sweets to an unusual form of shower. It was all things for all men. There was even a drapery and outfitting section attached, comprising, so far as I could see, some fearful and awful garments of Italian or Greek origin. I never ventured to buy.

If one were content to "live" on the country house-keeping could be extraordinarily cheap. Eggs were from forty to sixty for a dollar (about 1s. 6d.); chickens were three to a dollar if fat, four if thin. I have bought potatoes by the sack, weighing about fifty pounds, for a dollar. Joints of meat could not be bought, and, as the butchers' shops where beef was obtainable were open to the mangy and diseased dogs—I have seen them helping themselves—and to the flies, we preferred to do without beef and were limited to sheep, apart from poultry, for our meat diet. A whole live sheep in really good condition cost $2\frac{1}{4}$ or $2\frac{1}{2}$ dollars, and lasted us for three days. The sheep was generally bought on a Saturday morning, driven back from market and served for dinner that night. We therefore had mutton, in various forms, until Wednesday, when we went on to poultry for the rest of the week. It is not to be imagined that we finished a whole sheep in three days between just the two of us—the servants had the major portion. In this connection I remember making a gift to the staff on one of their more important feast-days. I had asked whether they preferred cloth or sheep, and one and all "plumped" for sheep. Our staff then consisted of ten, so, making a liberal allowance, I estimated three sheep would be sufficient and next day handed to the cook, in front of the whole staff, seven and a-half dollars to purchase the sheep. There was a look of disappointment on their faces, so I inquired what was the matter—weren't three sheep sufficient?

"No, matey, ten servants, ten sheep."

I stood aghast, but as I had promised them sheep, I had no alternative than to produce the cash for the remaining seven. That evening, when the feast was to take place, the ten sheep were rounded up for my inspection and allowed to roam about grazing in the compound. When dinner had been concluded, and the house closed,

the servants' orgy started. Next morning there was not a sheep to be seen, but ten sheepskins were displayed to me. Each skin was worth a dollar, and this was the recognized perquisite of the cook. It is perhaps universal knowledge that the Abyssinians still prefer to eat their meat raw. With their sharp knives they cut off "chunks" of meat which they convey to their mouth; getting a good grip with their teeth, they slice off the portion in their mouth—how they avoid cutting their nose and mouth has always remained a mystery to me. As can be imagined after an orgy of raw meat they all suffer from a form of maggot inside, for which they take a strong dose of aperient, made from the leaf of a tree, the "kossa," common to the country. So strong is the remedy that partakers are absent from duty for at least twenty-four hours, and are in a very weak state.

Feasts and fasts alternate, and so much in awe are the Abyssinians of their priests that these are observed very faithfully. In some of the fasts, lasting quite a number of days, the only food permitted is their *injera*, and that must be made from water. No milk, butter, fat, or sweet thing, must enter their mouths, and from my own observations these fasts are strictly kept. Out motoring one day we offered some sweet biscuits to our chauffeur and he actually refused them because it was during a fast. Abyssinians love sweet things of every kind. During the fast of Ramadan, kept by Mohammedans, it was smilingly said between us that our meals would not be so well cooked or tasty. The cook could not taste or sample what he was cooking, as, being Mohammedan, he was fasting!

Around Addis Ababa the rivers are too swift for much fishing to be done, and the only fresh-water fish we ever had was a kind of whitebait, which was delicious. Although I am not a lover of fish as a diet, we longed for it occasionally, as a change. We of course could get

it tinned, but it isn't the same. Although we could get all that was essential from the country we indulged in quite a lot of luxuries in the shape of tinned foodstuffs, and I often pondered over the debt Abyssinia, and other similar countries, owes to "Mortons." Other marques can now be obtained, but Mortons are easily the favourite, and I personally found their products exceedingly good.

It is these tinned provisions that make housekeeping in Abyssinia so expensive. At the altitude of 8,000 to 10,000 feet fresh fruit was difficult to get, so I depended entirely on tinned fruit for my sweets. Lower down oranges, papaiya (paw-paw), and bananas can be obtained in moderate quantities, but somehow they do not seem to keep well up in Addis Ababa, and are expensive. We once got a box of Australian apples sent to us from Aden. When the case arrived a good many of the apples were unfit to eat. What with the original cost, the carriage up to Addis Ababa, the duties, each apple worked out at one dollar in total cost. We did not repeat the experiment. Owing to the fact that the trees can get no rest, fruit-growing in the highlands has not been a success. I have seen on the same tree and at the same time fruit in every stage, from the blossom to the fully ripe fruit. Strawberries grow profusely, but they are no larger than peas after the first season.

We made another experiment—fish from Djibouti. This was when the first "express" trains were put on, doing the journey in thirty-six hours instead of three days. I sent down to Djibouti and asked for five kilos of fish to be sent up, to be well stuffed with salt, and packed in ice in a box. This was duly despatched and a telegram was sent us to meet the train, which we did with pleasant anticipations. On arrival at the house the fish was taken promptly into the kitchen and the box opened up—and I fell back. I can only compare it to sulphuretted hydrogen. True there was salt, abundance of it, and a

small portion of ice still remained, but the fish had not been cleaned ! I didn't risk a second experiment. Others, however, persevered, but the experiment was never an unqualified success.

To get away from the eternal sameness of the dinners provided by the cook when special guests, High Officials (with capitals), were expected, I always had a special store of dainties from the stores, and these were treasured and only issued by me personally. We were giving a *burra khana* to a few friends in the legation, so I trotted out a complete dinner—tinned—from my special store and handed it to the cook with special instructions. That dinner was served in duplicate. First came the cook's soup, then turtle soup; the cook's entrée followed by my expensive tinned fish; the cook's chicken followed by my boned turkey; and lastly his masterpiece in a cream sweet, with real plum-pudding to follow. My guests could not cope with that alderman's banquet, but I was heartbroken to see my special dainties being refused. The cook presumably thought it an insult that his dinner should not be considered sufficiently good, and, although he had to obey my instructions, he very effectively spiked my guns.

CHAPTER SIX

IT was evident, soon after our arrival, that our first bungalow was quite unsuitable—it was too small, the servants' quarters and stables were inadequate, and it was too far out of the town. In the first three months we spent £60 on taxis, going into the town only, so we made up our mind to move into the town if we could find a suitable house.

It was at our first bungalow that I had a peculiar accident. I had been into town and went into the bungalow with my "double terai" on, going straight into our bedroom to fetch something. Whilst I was passing the window the whole frame, glass and all, fell out straight on to me, knocking me on to the bed! My head went completely through a pane of glass, and that I suffered nothing more than a severe headache was owing to the fact that my double terai acted as a buffer. The brim was large enough to envelope my head, and the frame rested on my shoulders. I recollected that most injuries are inflicted when withdrawing from glass, so, literally, kept my head and shouted. Fortunately our landlady's Abyssinian "nannie" was in the house and she came to my rescue. It was an awkward predicament, and might have been extremely serious.

Whilst house-hunting we "camped" at the office, and, although I was most loath to leave, the increasing business demanded all the accommodation the house could afford, and we had to look around for some sort of building which we could make into a home, and with some land which I could make into a garden. We must have looked at every vacant house in and around Addis Ababa, and I

was beginning to despair of ever finding anything suitable, when by chance our Armenian interpreter, who was acting as our "house agent," casually mentioned that there was a nice house in the middle of the town. He said it was occupied but thought with a little suasion we could obtain it.

My husband immediately put us into the car and off we went to have a look at this treasure. The approach to it was appalling, a mere pretence of a road down a steep incline with boulders strewn all over, and we could not get as far as the proper entrance by car, so had to make use of the back entrance. We were unable to make anyone hear; there were no servants about, so at our own sweet will we wandered round outside the house, trying to gauge its possibilities, and round the compound. Although the house was well built, it wanted a lot of doing up, and the compound was a wilderness, but I liked the look of it all and saw that it had possibilities. The next step was to find out who was the real owner, so we put our tame Armenian on to the job, and in due course he informed us that the owner was an Abyssinian lady of rank, with a husband in close attendance upon the Empress Zaiditu, so, with the interpreter, we lost no time in calling upon her. We were made welcome when our mission was made known, and the lady in due course made her appearance, and we were ushered into the reception room.

Imagine a decent-sized room, about thirty feet by fifteen, devoid of any furniture except that in the centre of one of the longer sides of the room there was a dais with a glorified canopy, made of the commonest white cotton material, suspended from the ceiling and encircling the whole of the dais. With the aid of numerous pillows and cushions she was made comfortable on the floor of the dais, her female and male attendants standing round her; and we were provided with bentwood chairs. After

innumerable handshakings, *tenastelings* (greetings) and skirmishing around a variety of topics, we got down to our subject. She was only too glad to let her house to English people; she undertook to move the present occupants out, and we could move in in a month's time. We made a formal agreement and took our departure highly elated, but our joy was short-lived as our interpreter informed us that the occupant of the house we wanted was a doctor and a "very bad man," and his words were only too true, as we learned later.

Whilst waiting to move into the house our furniture was being made locally by Indian carpenters from illustrations taken from catalogues of some highly renowned London West-End shops. At the end of a month my husband called formally on the doctor, and was received at the back door (there was no answer to repeated knockings on the front door) by a golden-haired siren, of apparently Danish or Swedish nationality, who stated that the doctor was out, that his wife was just being confined, and that there was no idea of leaving. My good man was not to be daunted, so made another call a few days later—and was chased off the premises. The landlady then took a hand in the game and appealed to the German Legation, as the doctor declared himself to be a German, but the legation could do nothing so the Imperial authorities were called upon to eject the occupant, with the knowledge and consent of the legation. By this time some secret history of the so-called doctor had leaked out. Although practising as a doctor of medicine, he had no right or qualification to do so. He had studied for a short time at some continental school of medicine, but had stolen the certificate of a fellow student and had taken refuge in Abyssinia. His name was not even his own. He was not married to the woman he was living with, and the woman who had "received" my husband on the first occasion was another mistress. A fine house-

hold to follow! His dossier was a particularly bad one, and he was "wanted" by his country on other charges.

On the instructions of the palace a small body of policemen, with an officer, called upon the doctor and gave him twenty-four hours to vacate, remaining on the premises whilst the furniture was being removed and, incidentally, helping in the removal. Our troubles were not, however, yet at an end. When we were told that the house was empty my husband and I went round and found another German wandering about the compound, and the stables full of horses belonging to him. There were fifteen horses, and the German informed us that he was a boarder with the doctor and had no intention of leaving, as he was the King's trainer. Fortunately the Abyssinian officer was still on the spot, and he made it clear to the German that he had to quit. He asked for two days' grace to find other accommodation for his horses, and we granted this, as we did not require the stables immediately, but were told we should have to obtain consent from the palace. This consent was withheld by the authorities, so the stables were cleared the next day. We were subsequently informed that the German trainer had shot two Abyssinians, one actually in the house and another in the compound, on the score that they were thieves breaking in.

The "doctor" left Addis Ababa, intending, so it was said, to go to Afghanistan, but later the German Legation heard that he had committed suicide by throwing himself overboard in the Red Sea. Both his mistresses were stranded and set up a house of ill-fame in Addis Ababa, but were soon deported.

In spite of the evil reputation of the house, and the fact that I had not set foot inside to see what it was like, we were still determined to take it, as the house was well built and the situation was admirable. I learned later that the house had been designed and built by a Russian

architect some thirty years previously, when he was building the Russian Legation.

When we were at last free to take possession I found that, although we had not "bought a pig in a poke," the whole house wanted cleaning and disinfecting from top to bottom. We got a small army of workmen together to scrub the house down with soda and disinfectant and paint the woodwork, whilst another small army was employed in tidying up the compound and filling in some of the holes made in various attempts to find water—there were at least three of these holes going down twenty feet or more without any sign of water. The lack of water was a decided disadvantage but we persevered in a likely spot, and found the precious liquid at a depth of sixty feet. It was perfectly clean and pure water, but with a decided effect of Epsom salts! We soon got accustomed to it, however. It might have been a profitable venture to have bottled this and sold it under some highfalutin name as an aperient. At one of my luncheons a dear old lady on being asked what she would like to drink said "Decidedly not your water—I had my Epsoms this morning, thank you." So the reputation of this water had travelled afar.

A water closet had actually been installed in the house at some remote date, but, owing to the lack of water, had never been put into use. As there seemed to be enough water now, we soon had the system put in working order. To my surprise, too, I found the cistern on top of the bathroom also supplied an ordinary household "copper," with a fireplace below, so this had to be attended to also. In about a fortnight the house was ready for occupation, the garden cleaned and marked out for my flower-beds, paths, etc. The house was all that we could desire, and the hot-water system functioned admirably, especially when the well was completed and a pump fitted capable of lifting the water from sixty feet down to the top of the

house. These arrangements worked perfectly for the whole of the time we had the house, and we could really boast that we had "running hot and cold water."

I seem to have dwelt at undue length on the question of water, but this is a perpetual nightmare to residents in Addis Ababa. As the well we had dug in our compound was the only one within a radius of some hundreds of yards that gave a regular supply, we were inundated with requests from neighbours to be allowed to use it, and we never refused a request of this nature, whether from native or European. Although the supply never dried up entirely it nevertheless caused us some anxiety at times when there was a "run on it," especially at the end of the dry season and just before the rains. It took six weeks for the heavy rain to penetrate through the strata to the source of the well to make any difference in the level of the water in the well itself, and the rains, which lasted three months, had to provide us with sufficient water for nine months, so our anxiety can be well understood. Almost daily visits and periodical soundings were necessary, and we soon got to know, by sight, the regular frequenters. Our chauffeur, who had a *tukhul* just outside our front gates, was, of course, allowed to make use of the well, and it seemed to me that he must have kept quite a big establishment judging from the number of women who came to draw water and claimed to be his wife. On being questioned, he had several women—wives and slaves—but I insisted that only one woman should draw for his establishment, and that this one should be brought before me so that I should know her in future.

When we were living at the office the water from the well was badly contaminated and quite useless for household purposes, and as nothing could be done to remedy matters we had to fetch our daily supply from some hot springs about two miles away. I believe these hot

springs had some medicinal quality and a proper bathing establishment had been erected where sufferers from rheumatism, sciatica and kindred complaints could "take the cure." To obtain this water, which was free, we had to employ a *guragi* (coolie) and to purchase a donkey. Every morning the *guragi* drove the donkey out to the springs and returned with four kerosene tins of water (what should we do without our kerosene tins?) and which kept sufficiently hot for our baths. During the day he made as many more journeys as were necessary for all household requirements.

When we moved from the office to our new abode and water was found the services of "Neddy" as a water carrier were no longer required, but I could not part with him, so he became a gentleman of leisure and was christened "Ato Neddy" (Mr. Neddy), and even the servants spoke of him as thus. He was great fun and afforded me great amusement, and incidentally saved me from a mad dog. It was our daily custom before breakfast to pay our first visit to the stables, armed with sugar and carrots for the horses. Neddy was always roaming about, and immediately he caught sight of us he would greet us with a hee-haw, hee-haw, and come galloping over to us for his share of the dainties. Sometimes I would give him a piece of soft toffee, sticking it on to his teeth, and the expression on his face trying to get it free was ludicrous and always caused us to laugh. Fag ends of cigarettes did not come amiss to him. Although he hated grooming, and gave the syces considerable trouble, he was always ready to have his ears pulled and stroked by me.

It was while I was doing this one morning, at the end of the rains, that a shout from one of the syces at the stables caused my husband, who was standing a few paces away, to look around, and he saw a pi-dog coming through the hedge. As it came nearer it was obviously

mad, and my husband called to me to get out of the way. I didn't quite understand him, so, still pulling Neddy's ears, I turned round. The pi, with froth foaming from its mouth, came straight for us, but Neddy wheeled round and kicked out vigorously at the pi. I held on to Neddy's ears whilst it seemed to me that he was using me as a pivot, taking me round with him, whilst keeping the snarling pi at bay with his heels.

The syces came up, throwing stones at the dog which bolted for the front gates. Unfortunately these were closed, and one of the gardeners, who was working near the gates, turned it with a well-aimed stone. The dog raced back for us. By this time my husband was hurrying me towards the syce's quarters, but just as we got to the stall where we kept our colt, and before I could get into safety behind the doors of one of the syce's rooms, the mad dog was again upon us. I was carrying a small bucket containing carrots, and before my husband could intervene he jumped at me. I put up the bucket to protect myself, and the front paws of the dog struck my chest. My husband hurled himself at me, pushing me into the room, and in doing so more or less drove the dog into the colt's stall. The colt was kicking at the intruder and stamping round; my husband, in his riding-boots, was also waiting for an opportunity to get a kick at the dog, when the wife of one of the syces came out with a thick bough of a tree and drove the pi out. He made straight for the hedge followed by the shouting servants armed with sticks, shovels, and weapons of any kind they could pick up, but the pi got through and disappeared from view.

There was no doubt about it, the dog was dangerously mad, so all the servants were sent scurrying to see in which direction he was making so as to give warning to passers-by. Our neighbour, however, came through the hedge just then to say two men had been bitten and a

third attacked, and that this was usually the final spasm in hydrophobia before the dog died in convulsions. We were later informed that the dog had died soon after, that morning.

It was not at all reassuring for me, as I could not tell if, when the dog had jumped upon me, any of the foam from his mouth had actually touched me or whether I had any sort of open scratch. I was closely examined and made to get out of the clothes I was wearing and wash my hands, etc., with strong disinfectant. The question was hotly debated as to whether I should, or should not, receive the Pasteur treatment. I was all against it. In the first place I was certain no exposed part of me had been touched, and secondly the treatment given by an Armenian veterinary surgeon, who was the only one able to give it, was crude and extremely painful. Two of our friends had recently undergone the cure and I had seen what they suffered.

I gained the day, but for forty days we were on tenter-hooks, and the climax came just about the fortieth day. Waking one morning I found I could not move my legs and it was agony for me to turn in bed. I looked at my husband, and my own suspicions were reflected in the look on his face. Without any further words he ordered the car to fetch the doctor at once. Naturally I was nervous at the outcome, as it would be due to my obstinacy if rabies should have developed and at this stage, would have been incurable. When the doctor did arrive—how the time dragged!—and had thoroughly examined me, he gave his verdict as common or garden lumbago! Painful as it was, I hugged him!

We may be forgiven for imagining that it might have been rabies, as just at that time it was very much in the air. Only a short time previously I had been spending a few days with some friends who were farming not far from Addis Ababa and narrowly escaped being infected.

A dog they had had for some time suddenly developed rabies and the dog-boy and the owner had to be treated, whilst a girl friend in Addis Ababa has also allowed herself to be infected whilst attempting to feed what she thought was just a sick dog, whereas it afterwards proved to have had rabies.

It is rather remarkable that rabies in Addis Ababa was far more frequent after the rains than at any other time of the year. Various theories have been put forward for this—one being that the dogs drank from the puddles in the road, paths, etc., and that a germ got into the water and the dog drew in the germ whilst drinking. This is common, I know, amongst sheep in Abyssinia, and it is probably the same with dogs.

An unfortunate case was brought to our attention just after my scare. A Greek woman out in the interior was bitten by her pet dog. There was no road that could be used by a car and the poor woman had to "trek" in to Addis—a twenty-four days' march. On the way she suffered untold agonies, and when she arrived in the capital it was too late—she died a terrible death. From that time I will not have a dog of my own when I am abroad, nor will I ever knowingly touch a dog, even if it is a carefully tended pet.

Making, and working in, my garden was a great joy to me. I am not a gardener, and my methods are very "slap dash," but flowers must be fond of me, as I get results denied to others. Or it may be that I am pleased with little, whereas my friends, who know even the Latin names, expect too much. Whilst making my garden my friends very generously kept me well supplied with flowers, and it was from these cuttings that my garden grew. Red roses grow in wild profusion in Abyssinia, and when our wilderness had been tidied up I discovered, to my joy, that there were a number of these, but they were suffering from age and decay. I was ruthless with

them, pulling up where past hope and cutting down to the very ground where there was promise. Stalks from geraniums, chrysanthemums, carnations, yellow and white roses were carefully kept and planted by me when the blooms had faded. Gardens of friends were raided for cuttings of all kinds and the beds gradually filled up with what looked like dead pieces.

My husband frankly and openly derided my efforts, but I persevered whilst waiting for seeds from home. The first rains brought me hope, many of my cuttings were "shooting," and I had great expectations. I used supports made from bamboo, and even these sprouted and were carefully transplanted so as to form a hedge on an unsightly bank; nasturtium seeds were strewn along a split eucalyptus fence; black-wattle seeds, in clumps, planted to form an avenue to the front gates. I was coming to the conclusion that anything would grow in Abyssinia.

The seeds of pansies, violas, forget-me-nots, wall-flowers, sea-lavender, salvia and many other kinds I had ordered from home arrived before the end of the rains and were put into what I called "the nursery" in the terrace under my bedroom window. Although it was a large compound I could only get a portion, immediately in front and on one side of the house, allotted to me for my garden; the rest of the compound was fenced off and given over as a paddock for the horses. Everyone one smiled at my efforts with daffodils, as these had not previously been a success at 9,000 feet, but I had the laugh over them eventually. My bulbs were not altogether a success, the ants delighted in them.

By the end of the year the split eucalyptus fence was covered with nasturtiums, my bamboo hedge was coming on, and tiny wattle trees were coming through and were pricked out. Beds of sea-lavender, all colours, clumps of snapdragons, borders of verbena, rows of lilies and dahlias were becoming increasingly apparent, and my

hopes ran high. The dahlias were healthy, and in time were beautiful: some of them were six inches in diameter. The wallflowers and forget-me-nots were disappointments, however; they spread luxuriantly but I never got a bloom from them. Sweet peas were not altogether a success; they flowered, but there was no scent. My carnations, however, were my pride. The beds were getting overgrown, so with thin strips of plaited bamboo each plant was given a "cradle," making the beds look like an exhibition of home-made basket-work, but in due course these cradles were hidden by the carnations.

After my household duties were finished my afternoons were spent in the garden tending to my plants. The two "jungle-wallahs" who were my gardeners, and hadn't the slightest knowledge of gardening when I took them on, were getting enthusiastic and beginning to show some signs of intelligence as to what I required. I was mad, quite mad, according to their ideas, but slowly it dawned on them that there was some method in my madness, especially when they saw my "dead pieces" shooting and, in the fullness of time, producing flowers. When I was ill the head gardener made up a wonderful posy of pansies for me every morning and brought them to my room himself—at no other occasion would he venture into the house.

At first I used a spade and fork myself whilst the gardeners looked on, but later I was never allowed to handle any large tool, as these were immediately taken off me by the gardeners. The head gardener liked nothing better than sitting on his haunches "budding" the carnations, or making the cradles, whilst his assistant weeded.

Every drop of water needed for my garden had to be pumped up sixty feet twice a day by the gardeners, who had also to see that the house cistern was kept full. They would not, however, give a hand's turn in drawing

water for the horses—this had to be done by the syces. Apart from the eucalyptus trees there were only two other trees in the garden; one was the patriarchal juniper and the other a pepper tree. Bees loved the latter, and there was a continuous humming from it all day long; chameleons, too, are supposed to like, and frequent, pepper trees, but I had no luck in finding any. They are charming little creatures and can soon be tamed as pets.

Within a year of our entering our residence my garden was a mass of colour; there was not the slightest trace of formality, but it was a perfect picture. I had eighteen vases in the house, and these were kept continuously filled by me with flowers of every kind and colour. Unfortunately flowers in Abyssinia have little or no smell. "Doing the flowers" was entirely my job, as the house servants had no idea of arranging the vases: cramming each vase with as many flowers as it could hold was their ideal. On our first Christmas Day I was cutting lovely roses, and could not help contrasting the conditions with the English climate. My carnation beds were perfectly lovely; and, amply repaid me for all the trouble I had taken over them. On one occasion I gladly allowed the representative of a certain foreign community to make a bouquet for the wife of her Ambassador on her arrival in the capital. She chose all white blooms, and the bouquet must have delighted the heart of any woman. On another morning I gathered one hundred and eighty blooms for an official "do," and the beds did not look in the least as if they had been raided to this extent.

I shall not readily forget one effort of the gardeners to please me. Between my carefully tended flower-beds, and between the plants leading to the front gate, the head gardener told me they had planted something specially for my benefit. It was to be a great secret and surprise, and I could not extract from him what he had planted, so had to bide my time. My feelings were beyond descrip-

tion when the secret was revealed, and the plants turned out to be potatoes ! I simply had to let them grow ; they afforded a certain amount of greenness, but the yield was practically negligible. More in sorrow than in anger, I was compelled to see that the gardeners restored the ground to its original state. I don't think I was ever forgiven.

Tending my garden, filling the vases with flowers, keeping an eye on the gardeners, filled my afternoons, and I was often questioned as to what I did with myself in the afternoons, and didn't I find the time drag. There was always something to do in the garden, always something new and of interest, and the afternoons never seemed long enough.

The Abyssinian is very fond of flowers, especially for personal adornment. Whenever he can he will procure a rose, or a carnation, and wear it by ramming the stem up a nostril so that the flower itself dangles between nose and mouth. Occasionally he will wear it behind his ear. My servants were very fond of presenting me with bouquets—made up of course from flowers in my own garden or purloined from neighbours. These bouquets are invariably the same—tightly compressed blooms of every kind without any regard to æsthetic effect, the stems being tightly bound round with wire so that the flowers die very soon. The presentation of a bouquet always heralded a request for an advance of pay or a gift of sheep for a feast. When I had been absent for some weeks, convalescing from a serious illness, the servants, to welcome me on my return, had placed flowers in every imaginable place in the house, and it was a gorgeous sight.

We encouraged the birds to visit us, and our garden was a sanctuary to them. I never tired of watching them and admiring their beautiful plumage. There was Master Crow—peculiar to Abyssinia—with his white ruffle

and waistcoat, lording it like an alderman at a banquet; honey-suckers, with the colours of the rainbow flashing like jewels in the sun as they flitted from flower to flower, sipping up the honey with their long beaks; the lovely Abyssinian starling with feathers of an iridescent purple-blue; the cheeky little fire-thrushes, the male with a scarlet breast and back, while poor little Mrs. Fire-thrush had to be contented with a drab brown. One pair actually built their nest and hatched out their babies in a corner of the bookcase in our sitting-room. I watched the house-boy dusting in this part of the room so as not to disturb or frighten the lovely little things. All and sundry, including doves, came to my afternoon parties, picking up the crumbs scattered for them, showing not the slightest fear whilst they chattered away to their hearts content whilst I watched them. If I were late for any reason they waited for me in the juniper tree, or perched on the well or horse-trough.

It would be worth while for an ornithologist to visit Abyssinia, accompanied by a photographer and artist, as there is a large variety of bird life and some specimens only to be found in Abyssinia.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MOST of the compound given over to the horses as a paddock was on the side of a hill, and it was here that we allowed the horses to run wild every Sunday morning. This hillside was always a disadvantage, especially in the rains, when the water came rushing down from above our compound like a cascade through our grounds, carrying everything moveable with it. One of the servants was caught unawares—he had left his mattress outside his quarters for an airing. Before he remembered, a storm broke upon us, and watching from a window I saw the mattress being swept down the hillside like a raft in a rough sea. Fortunately for us, most of this volume of water was able to escape through a hedge at the bottom of our compound into our neighbour's garden, except just in front of the stables, where it formed a miniature lake, necessitating gum-boots being worn by us when we visited the stables.

At one time we had as many as eight horses in the stables, although our horses were continually changing; my good man is devoted to them, understands them thoroughly, and has a way with them. Although I say it, our horses were the envy of everyone, not only for the way they were turned out, but the manner in which they were trained and schooled, and we never had any difficulty in disposing of any horses that we did not require, or which were not up to our standard.

The stables were run on cavalry lines; we visited them three times a day when the horses were being fed, and if they had not been used that day each one was brought out into the open for inspection, their coats and

feet being thoroughly inspected. Every Saturday night they were given a "bran mash" and were not used the following day. At first the syces were very fond of washing the horses, but this was soon stopped, and the horses had to be cleaned by grooming, and grooming only. Saddles were soaped and greased every Sunday morning and laid out for inspection. All our saddles were brought out from home, and our horses were easily recognizable by their groomed appearance and general "turn-out." Our saddles cost us £25 each, whereas horses were cheap, and prices ranged from £3 to £5 each if bought from the native.

On a certain pay day whilst we were reading, waiting for dinner, the "chicken boy" (*alias* kitchen boy) suddenly appeared in front of us in our sitting room, obviously scared to death. Something unusual must have happened for him to take this extreme measure of coming into our sitting-room, so my husband went out to investigate. One of the syces, very drunk, had invaded the kitchen and insisted on helping to cook the dinner. When my husband entered he was stirring the soup with a long-bladed knife, and although he answered obediently enough when my husband called him he made no attempt to leave the kitchen. It was useless, and silly, to resort to force to expel him, so I was called in, and no sooner had I put in an appearance than the syce, like a faithful dog, came out and very docilely handed me the knife when I asked for it. I ordered him to the stables and we returned to our books and drinks.

It wasn't many minutes however before I heard another row, this time between the syces, and the cause of it was that our saddles were missing! We made a thorough search of the house, stables and garden, but they were nowhere to be seen, and the younger syce kept telling us that Damassie had stolen the saddles and hidden them. Damassie was incoherent, but I gathered was

protesting his innocence, and somehow I believed him. It was only when we threatened to have the police in that I saw the junior syce was troubled. I made a "long-shot," guessed that he was jealous of Damassie and wanted to get him into trouble, so made up my mind to have a thorough search *under* all the hay! There, true enough, were the saddles, and it transpired that they could only have been put there by the younger syce when he saw the head syce was drunk and incapable of defending himself. It was difficult at first to get the servants to work together and without all these petty jealousies, but I think I managed in the end.

The horses were generally in a sorry condition when brought for us to buy, with bleeding mouths caused by the cruel Abyssinian bits, and with sore backs from the ill-fitting saddles and heavy packs, and it took an expert eye to visualize what might be turned into a presentable pony from the screws that were constantly being paraded before us.

When a purchase was completed the pony was given a stall to himself, as his presence was generally resented by the other horses. For two days he was fed on bran-mash so as to reduce his barrel—bulging through being fed on grass only—down to normal. With his coat clipped, his mane hogged and his fetlocks and feet cleaned up, he soon presented another appearance, except for the nasty, raw wounds on the hocks caused by the primitive and cruel method of hobbling used by the natives. These scars were very noticeable, even when they were perfectly healed, and, whilst they did not affect the pony in any way, they were always blemishes. For any period up to six months the new purchase did not work, as it took about this time to heal the mouth and sore back and to get him into anything like condition, and used to white faces. After the cruel bits he had been used to, the English polo or hunting bits we used were as

if nothing had been put into his mouth, and he had to be taught bending, etc., so as to answer to the reins. He had also to be taught to stand still when being mounted, as the Abyssinian, born horseman that he is, generally throws himself into, or out of, the saddle whilst the horse is on the move, and very often this is only "swank" on the rider's part.

There was another thing that was "taboo" and that was for any of the syces or servants to ride the ponies bare-back after they had come into our possession. The Abyssinian, like all Eastern races, has an anatomy that is guaranteed to produce a sore back on a horse if ridden without a saddle.

The ponies are on the small side, from 14 to 14½ hands, and are very sure-footed, nimble and hardy, and, although not fast, make excellent polo ponies. They have no inherent vices and "leap" like cats—it is a saying that an Abyssinian pony can jump anything he can see over, and I can well believe that. We had bought a new pony from the interior, and, although he had been with the other horses in the stables for over a month, the first Sunday morning they were all let loose in the paddock for a romp the other ponies chased the newcomer. In his nervousness he broke into my garden, and there he stood close to the fence, looking bewildered, trembling with fear, but looking a perfect picture. No one was allowed to go near him for some time, and when he appeared to have quietened down my husband told the syce, who usually attended to him, to approach quietly. When the syce was still a few yards away the pony was again visibly frightened and stood there snorting at the nearness of even his usual attendant. When he could stand it no longer, *from a standstill* he cleared the fence, which was by no means a low one, and raced back to the stable ! It surprised us all, and confirmed the jumping powers of these ponies.

Our horses afforded us great fun at all times, especially when they were being trained for the races. We used to be at the race course, at the other end of the town, early in the morning, long before anyone arrived, and our horses were exercised and galloped and were generally being led away as the other ponies put in an appearance. It was not from secrecy that this was done, but owing to the fact that my husband was a business man, and training the ponies was not allowed to interfere with business hours.

Although we were not very successful in winning races the training was carried out strictly to a programme, only as a means to an end—to get the ponies as fit as possible. If they won a race so much the better. It was well worth the trouble and early rising to see the “poor-conditioned” horses coming on, their coats shining, their eyes and noses clear, and the muscles rippling as they moved—totally different creatures from what they had been when we first bought them. After an important race on one occasion—when we had been lucky—I went down, with a friend, to the paddock where the horses were being unsaddled. Our pony was just then being “scraped down.” He recognized my voice, broke away from the syce and came across to me to be petted and given his usual sugar. My friend could not help remarking on the fact that all our horses looked as if they were “pets”—and so they were.

All our ponies, in addition to being trained for racing, were also taught to play polo. Although my husband's methods were not cruel—he never used whip or spur—I could not bear to see the ponies being made to do the same thing over and over again. I was perfectly useless at it, as, although I have light hands, I didn't possess the necessary patience. I particularly hated to see my own pony being “put through his paces,” but before we left Abyssinia this very pony could be ridden on to the polo

field by my husband and would follow the ball, stop, turn on his haunches, and gallop without the reins being touched. He was a perfect mount in every way, except that when I was on his back he always thought he was playing polo, by the way in which he kept changing his feet.

Somehow, polo has never seemed to "catch on" amongst the Abyssinians, seeing that they are such good horsemen. Perhaps the persistent training required by the ponies, and the very strict discipline and rules necessary on the polo field, did not appeal to them. If there were keen riders at the British Legation the game flourished; if not, it just languished. The few English, and other non-officials in the town could not muster enough to form two teams, and it therefore depended on the facilities given to the Indian Sowars, who formed the escort to the British Minister, to take part and enable the game to be played at all. Attempts were made from time to time to get some of the younger Abyssinians of standing to take up the game, but the efforts never met with much success. The polo ground was inside the race course and was a most delightful spot, although, when we left, it was being spoiled, as the Emperor's aerodrome was on the same site and the arrival and departure of planes cut up the ground. When races were on, and during the hours devoted to exercising the ponies in the mornings, no machines were allowed to fly.

The race course is comparatively good, and the Imperial Club is responsible for all arrangements for racing and provides four meetings a year, affording a very agreeable interlude to life in the capital. The club house is admirably and pleasantly situated, whilst the view across the country to the distant hills is very fine. Each meeting lasts a day; the Emperor attends in state; lunch is served at the club; the racing is keenly followed, and a pari-mutuel is also installed. The club enclosure,

with the flower-beds and the smart gay frocks paraded, presents quite an animated picture. The Emperor and the Heir-Apparent take quite an active interest in the racing, and the Imperial colours may be counted upon to take part in every race.

When the late Empress Zaiditu was alive there was an unfortunate accident at one of the jumps in a steeplechase. The horse belonging to the Empress collided with the King's horse as they were coming over the jump, both horses fell, but luckily the jockeys fell clear. Both horses had to be destroyed, and in condoling with the King on the accident he replied that there could be no sport without risk. Most of the Abyssinian ponies show a distinct trace of Arab blood, and the Emperor Haile Sellassie is encouraging the breeding of ponies so as to obtain an improved type. For this purpose he has imported some Arab mares and stallions, and their progeny have already proved successful. Abyssinian mares are not allowed to be sold from the interior.

The Emperor usually presents the prizes and very graciously adds an Abyssinian golden sovereign to the prize money won by a European. These sovereigns are rare, and are consequently much treasured. We value a bowl in which we have one of these coins inserted.

Perhaps the only time a regular "book" has been made at a race meeting in Addis Ababa was the outcome of a very convivial luncheon, composed entirely of young English people, at a certain meeting. The races proper were to be followed by a jumping competition which had evolved itself into an international contest. Italians were taking part, and with their elegance, and specialized training, they might win, but all English hopes were centred on an Englishman competing, with his perfect hands, English hunting seat, and perfect manners of his mount. Permission was obtained from the treasurer of the club on the understanding that a percentage of the

profit was to go to the club—if there were a loss it had nothing to do with the club. This was immediately agreed to, and the three self-appointed “bookies,” with their clerk, started work, shouting the odds with raucous voices. The few English gave a lead, and, although the foreigners did not quite understand at first what all the row was about, they came along and laid their bets. The betting on the Englishman narrowed down to “evens,” and he won eventually by a faultless display of jumping. My husband was a “partner” in the syndicate, controlling the odds and actually making the book. The profit to the club was over £3—I am not allowed to say what the profit to the “bookies” was, but they all admit it was a very profitable half-hour, and were prepared to run books at every meeting!

When the first airplanes, purchased by the Emperor, were due to arrive at Addis Ababa a landing-ground about five miles out on the road leading to Addis Alem was prepared. It was a great day for Abyssinia, and everyone, Abyssinians and foreigners, wended their way to the landing-ground. The congestion of traffic at one point was incredible. Of course there was no control and a motor-car bumped into our expensive brand-new car from behind. My good man jumped out to see what damage had been done and, in English, soundly rated, not in parliamentary terms, the driver of the car behind—a member of a foreign missionary society. The apologies tendered in fluent English took my husband aback—he could say no more, and, as the rear bumpers had taken the impact of the bump no more was said and he got back into the car, feeling very ashamed of his outburst.

We struggled along for some time, but real progress was impossible, and at that rate we should have reached the landing-ground at dusk, so at a convenient spot we turned the car round and went back to an impromptu

lunch at home. Whilst we were having short drinks, waiting for lunch, we heard a familiar whirr above our heads, and there was the first plane to arrive in Abyssinia flying low, directly above our heads. We need not have left the house at all. The new landing-ground proved to be unsuitable and the only alternative was the racecourse. Naturally a considerable amount of objection was raised by the club committee, who were under the impression that the ground had been given as a gift, in perpetuity, to the club by the Emperor Menelik. Inquiries were made, and from the documents available it was learned that the ground was a gift—but not for the *exclusive* use of the club!

The Emperor, in a very sporting gesture, offered to give the club a fresh tract of ground on Shola Plain in exchange for the present course, and to provide an up-to-date race-course, club-house and stables out there, all at his own personal expense. The offer was carefully considered, but not accepted. It seems a pity. Although the ground was farther away it was capable of being developed into a very attractive club, on the lines of a country club, where members could spend pleasant week-ends, and stable their racing ponies permanently. As it is, the present course does not belong exclusively to the club and, as it is the only suitable spot near the town as a landing-ground, it will be more and more needed for aviation, and perhaps the Emperor's offer will not be repeated. The distance makes very little difference in a car—the Emperor's offer included the making of a road—whilst the ride out can be very pleasant. True, the new ground offered is not very level and consists of black cotton soil, which cracks in the very dry season, but these objections could easily have been overcome.

The Imperial Club in Addis Ababa has unfortunately been transformed into a club for the Diplomatic Corps, and, whilst outside members are pressed for their support,

very few members, other than those in the Diplomatic service, avail themselves of the club. The constitution of the club places its fortunes in the hands of the legations; if the legations are apathetic the club languishes, and this was the case not many years ago when the club was moribund and rapidly going into decay. Its funds were exhausted, subscriptions were negligible, and entries for the races had dwindled. A serious drive had to be made for outside financial support, and, although the club is in a more flourishing condition, it is not attractive to the non-official member. A tennis court was attached to the club, but was seldom used, and, as no funds were available for its upkeep, it was slowly going to pieces.

There was only one tennis court in the town, and, as this was strictly preserved, we decided to build our own in our compound. It was a bigger undertaking than we anticipated, as the court had to be cut out of the hillside and one end banked up to a height of ten feet or more. Over a hundred tons of soil were moved, and it was all done by direct labour, with primitive equipment, and under most amateur supervision. Eventually we had a court worth playing on, with a surface like a billiard-table. River sand was used for the surface and the court was kept regularly rolled by *guragis*, and marked out by the syces who voluntarily undertook these duties, in addition to acting as ball-boys. Although the one end had been banked up and supported, with the biggest boulders we could move into position, this end subsided after an unexpected heavy shower of rain whilst it was being rolled.

I was watching operations from our sitting-room window and thought the *guragis* who were pulling the roller were getting too near the end. To my horror I saw the roller, complete with *guragis*, suddenly disappear. It was an extremely funny sight the way they all disappeared, and I rocked with laughter, until I realized

that the *guragis* might be pinned down under that heavy roller and the weight of the collapsed bank. I ran out, calling for the servants, but to my great relief I saw the *guragis* coming round the corner, grey with fright, rubbing their "tummies" and calling upon Allah, and asking to be paid off at once. They were not hurt in the very least, only frightened.

It was impossible to effect repairs that afternoon, and and we had a tennis party on which could not be called off; fortunately the court itself had not been affected, only the run back, so we stationed a servant near the abyss to warn the players if they ran back too far. There were no casualties. Next day the bank was built up afresh and shored up with timber, and there were no more landslides.

The greatest gift we could make to our kitchen boy was a tennis ball discarded as no longer fit for use. With this ball our boy, with his pals, played for hours outside the fence behind our house. When his duties in the kitchen permitted, and we were playing tennis, he was always eager to act as ball-boy, in the hope of getting another ball.

One Saturday morning I had been going through my wardrobe, and had discarded a pair of pink silk camiknickers, and had thrown these outside on to the back-veranda to be put into the pit which we used as a rubbish hole. That afternoon some friends, including the Minister of a Foreign Legation and a First Secretary, were coming to tennis. There had been some really good tennis during the afternoon, and we were playing mixed doubles in which I was taking a rabbit's part. Engrossed in the game, I had not observed that the kitchen boy had come on to the court. I was in the act of serving when I noticed him at the other end, behind the players. I gasped and let my racket fall, convulsed as I was and unable to keep a straight face. There was the *lidj* (boy),

very proud, quite unconcerned, and ready to play his part as ball-boy, dressed up in my discarded camiknickers, and not another rag on! It is best left to the imagination—the dainty pink garments up against his black skin. The others players turned to discover the cause of my mirth, and the game could not proceed for a few minutes. The kitchen boy remained to carry out his duties.

Tennis at that height of 8,000 feet is not the same game as played at sea-level. Singles are definitely barred, and a certain British Minister, who had arrived from representing Great Britain in a Far Eastern country, only escaped with his life from the effects of ignoring the effects of altitude, and the advice tendered. Within a week of his arrival in Addis Ababa His Excellency took part in a game of tennis and I trust H.E. will forgive me, if he reads this effort of mine, for reminding him of it. His costume consisted of a tennis shirt, khaki shorts, and a pair of white cotton stockings coming well above the knees! It caused quite a stir in the small British circle when they heard of this departure in tennis kit, and here threatened to be a raid on cotton stockings!

Owing to the rarified air at that altitude the tennis balls seem to be much lighter, bounce much more, and travel much faster than at lower levels. They do not appear to "hang in the air" or dwell upon the ground, and give you no chance if you are not exactly in position to receive the ball, so the game is faster and more strenuous. It is difficult to keep the ball within the court, and the game is disappointing, after playing at lower levels, until the heart, hand and eye accommodate themselves to the different conditions. On the other hand, it is difficult to get used to normal conditions when playing at sea-level after playing in Addis Ababa.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FROM careful records kept over a period of years it has been definitely established that it rains every month in the year! It is slight for nine months—the so-called “dry season”—and there are the usual “small rains” round about Christmas, but one has to wait until about the middle of June for the rains proper, which last until the 25th of September, corresponding roughly to the south-west monsoon in India. The rains in June are heralded by heavy thunderstorms, accompanied by vivid flashes of lightning, and the whole atmosphere seems to be charged with electricity for days before. I confess that I was genuinely frightened at my first experience of a thunderstorm in the highlands of Abyssinia. I soon realized, however, that there was little to be frightened at, and when I had got accustomed to the storms I used to stand out on our veranda listening to the rumbling of the thunder and watching the lightning playing over the distant hills.

Heavy banks of cloud at first poise on the tops of the hills; these gradually descend until the hills are lost to view, and are only revealed for brief instants in a flash of lightning. The crackle of thunder is incessant and resembles the heavy guns during a big offensive on the Western Front during the Great War. Waiting for the “rains” is a depressing time; the whole of nature seems in a state of suspense, and one suffers from a lack of animation which cannot be got rid of; everything seems to be distorted and discoloured; petty annoyances assume gigantic proportions—all due to nerves and, perhaps, a touch of spleen.

At last the rains break—a blue-black sheet of water comes down and the world is darkened and shut out. There is nothing much to do, except to sit down and accept it philosophically, and with all the patience one can command. Outdoor amusements and interests are no longer available; gum-boots and mackintoshes are the order of the day, and must remain handy, even for a visit to the stables. Entertainments and dinner-parties come to an end, and even visit to friends are few and far between. The tennis court, however well drained you may think it is, becomes a miniature lake, and tennis is quite out of the question. Although our court drained off fairly rapidly, leaving a surface on which it was possible to play in between the storms, we found that it was hardly worth while, as the balls soon became sodden and heavy, getting in amongst the wet grass and greenery round the court, and the strings of the rackets suffered in consequence. Restringing could not be done in Addis Ababa, and we had to send to Aden, but it was not altogether satisfactory. We also contemplated substituting red rubber balls, but somehow it never came to anything.

In dry weather the roads leading out of the capital are bad enough; a month or six weeks after the rains have started they become quagmires and impossible, the ponies floundering up to their hocks in liquid mud, and very often up to the girths. At the commencement of the rains, however, while the tracks and paths are still hard, we would have the ponies out, and, wearing macs and rubber boots, we would go for a ride, fully expecting to get soaked to the skin, and we were seldom disappointed. During the heavy showers it seems as if the bottom has fallen out of the heavens; the rain pelts down, there is a distinct hiss in it if you are caught outside, and if you are in the house the noise on the corrugated-iron roof makes conversation impossible. Now the books you have received from home are read, and your arrears in corre-

spondence caught up. There is little or no business doing, as the *negadies* (native traders from the interior) are unable to come in with their produce, owing to the swollen rivers which they cannot cross, and it doesn't seem worth while going to the office, except on mail days. Streams which are mere trickles in the dry season are swollen in fifteen minutes to torrents, and in half an hour are raging and swirling ten feet or more deep, bringing down trees, dead animals, etc. The river close to us afforded every facility for washing clothes, and was very popular with the Abyssinians. One morning the river came down in full spate quite suddenly, and three unfortunate men, who were washing clothes, were swept away with no chance of being rescued. The rains clean and disinfect the roads and countryside generally, the air smells clean and bracing, and there is a pleasing thick smell of soaking earth and damp fragrance of rain-beaten plants.

The rains stop as suddenly as they start, the sun shines, a mist rises from the wet earth, and as suddenly all the familiar sounds that the rains have drowned break out again, explosive in their abrupt release; birds twitter again and preen themselves; insects and green things stir again; the leaves of the eucalyptus and palms rustle once more, shaking off the rain. The rains gradually lessen in September, storms are fewer and bright intervals more frequent, and with a finality that is almost incredible the rains stop on the 25th of September.

During September the country is gradually being covered with the maschal flower, rather larger, and more yellow, than a buttercup, until it seems as if the earth were being covered with a cloth of gold. The rains definitely end with the Feast of Maschal, on the 25th of September. The Emperor reviews his troops that day, and all Addis Ababa, including foreigners, attend the ceremony, and there is a general air of relief at the end of the rains, and a holiday spirit prevails. As the troops

and retainers pass the Emperor they carry flowers and pieces of wood, boughs, branches, which they throw on to a pile. This soon grows to a considerable height, and when it is dusk the whole pile is set alight. There is, too, an old custom attending the Feast of Mascal when, it is understood, any of his subjects with a grievance may approach the Emperor personally and lay his complaint before His Majesty. I have seen only one instance of this, but do not know whether redress, if any, is speedier on account of the occasion.

There is another pleasing Church festival and holiday earlier in the year, attended by thousands, and all foreigners, and called the "Blessing of the waters" (Temkat). The spot generally selected is the river lying at the bottom of the valley between the race-course and the French Legation. The priests camp out here the night before, the Emperor attends in state and remains for the whole ceremony, and all Addis Ababa troop out in the early hours of the day. It is an impressive sight with the colours of the Royal Household and Church dignitaries; and after the waters have been duly blessed the more religious-minded, and certainly the hardier, of the Abyssinians scramble into the water. I say hardier because the streams and rivers round Addis Ababa run icy cold and are probably colder than usual at that season of the year and hour of the day. The French Minister and Madame offer hospitality, and a cup of steaming hot chocolate is more than welcome, as it is definitely on the cold side watching the ceremony.

From here the crowds disperse to congregate on the race-course, breakfast is provided at the club for members, and the Dance of the Priests takes place. The priests in their clerical robes and vestments form up in two lines facing each other, whilst the heads of the Church with their huge, gorgeous, multi-coloured umbrellas form

a background. The Emperor takes his place at the end of the rows, and after the leading foreigners have presented themselves to His Majesty and taken their places the ceremony starts. Chanting all the time and accompanied by the tom-toms and other native instruments, the priests advance towards each other, retire, revolve, march and counter-march. It is a wonderful sight, set amidst delightful surroundings. The afternoon is devoted to a display of horsemanship and spear-throwing by the younger men, and the race-course is given over to the occasion.

I was eager at all times to learn all I could about Abyssinian history, its Church, religion and customs, and read every book on the subject I could lay hands upon, asked innumerable questions of all and sundry, and listened carefully to old residents and others who were well qualified to speak on the subjects. Unfortunately there are no historical traditions preserved of Abyssinia. There appear to be no national heroes living in prose or poetry. Any literature, scanty at its best, is reported to be stored away in the monasteries built on the islands in Lake Tsana, but as these islands are holy ground no one is allowed except the hermit monks. In the sixteenth century the country was conquered and overrun by Mohammedan invaders who came from the low-lying deserts towards the Red Sea, now occupied by the Dankalis. Every Church and monastery of any importance was sacked and burned, and with them must have gone priceless manuscripts and books, perhaps originals of the Scriptures, and it is not surprising, therefore, that there are no written records of Abyssinian history, at least none available to the foreigner, prior to the invasion.

In the Holy of Holies in every church throughout Abyssinia there is supposed to be a copy of the casket containing the tables of stones brought by Moses from Mount Sinai; legend has it that the original was taken

from Jerusalem by Menelik the First and stored in Axum Cathedral. On a voyage home we had as a fellow passenger a Professor of Oriental Languages, who was making a study of the Jewish Sects in Abyssinia and for this purpose had travelled throughout Abyssinia and had been to Axum. He declared that he had seen the so-called Ark, and that it was written in the Greek language and preserved in a box of Indian workmanship!

There may be some doubt as to whether the Ark is in Abyssinia, but there may be something in the claim—the Jews admit that they have lost sight of it after a certain period. Recent investigations in and around Lake Tsana have failed to establish any claim, but, as some of the monasteries and their libraries are still forbidden to the outside world, there may be a possibility that the Ark was actually brought to Abyssinia. The libraries of the monasteries, which were visited, contain some well illuminated books, most of which, however, are undated. Among the finds, however, was the King List from Adam to David and Solomon through Menelik the First down to the present day. There seems to be no doubt therefore that the Emperors of Ethiopia are descended directly from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

All Abyssinian churches are circular in shape with thatched roofs supported on pillars and arches. Apart from the main building there is a small house, always to the east, known as Bethlehem in which are stored the bread and wine of Sacrament. Corresponding to our vestry is another building where are stored the vestments of the Church, books, and other Church property.

Piety, if not learning, is the heritage of the clergy of Abyssinia. It is the only Church in Christendom that can boast of ascetics who practise the austerities of hermits. The form of Christianity as preached by the Apostle of Ethiopia, St. Frumentius, has lost some of its primitive character, and the mass of people can best be

described as pagan Christians. In essentials the religion is soundly Catholic, although not intelligently so, and mixed with Jewish practices and other not quite so worthy. Until recently it received its Abouna, or Bishop, from the Orthodox Coptic Church of Egypt, but it appears that it has now asserted its authority. For centuries, in the early period of Christianity, Ethiopia was under the sway of Rome. It then fell under the influence of the Egyptian Coptic Church, but was again united to Rome by Portuguese Jesuits in the sixteenth century. Once more it broke away, but the fervour with which a cardinal was received by the Copts during his tour as Apostolic Visitor suggested that reunion with the Holy See is not outside the bounds of possibility.

In 1930 an Ethiopian was consecrated a bishop in Rome and now rules a diocese in his own country with the aid of native clergy. There is a recently erected building in the Vatican City, on a hill behind St. Peter's, which has been built and financed by the Holy See and is intended as a College for Ethiopians. It is a magnificent building on a commanding site. Along the policy of the present Pontiff ample opportunity is given to the Oriental Churches to return to Rome. No effort is spared to bring back those who have not consciously erred but only unconsciously wandered. Abyssinia would appear to be a preferred child.

Before we came out to Abyssinia my husband, when in London, was connected with interests in Abyssinia. In this capacity he was approached by a well-known City figure and asked if he would buy an old coloured print of the "Obelisk at Axum" (the old religious Capital of Abyssinia). My husband agreed to the price, provided he liked the print, and when this was produced the deal was concluded. The history attaching was interesting. The cook of the "seller" had been for some years with an English titled family and when she married her

employer, in addition to a more practical gift, gave her this print, which had been in the family for some years, as a wedding present. Later, the cook decided to turn this into cash and asked her present employer to dispose of it for her. It was in this fashion that it came into our possession. It occupied a prominent position in our sitting-room in Addis Ababa, and was admired by all. Many offers were received for it, and declined, until the Secretary to the new Abyssinian Senate saw it, also admired it, and said he would like it for His Majesty. The offer was too good to resist, and the picture left our possession. It was an exceedingly good investment on my husband's part.

Although Abyssinia is, on the whole, a Christian nation, the only Christian nation in Darkest Africa, there still remains to this day a tribe, the Gallas, who adhere to the Mohammedan religion. Farmers, good horsemen and sturdy warriors, they earned this right to their old religion by the stout resistance they offered in days gone by to those who sought to conquer them and to impose Christianity upon them. Our cook was a Mohammedan, and on a certain Mohammedan feast I asked the head boy if the cook wanted a holiday. The reply was brief and illuminating: "Cook only *tinnish* [little] Mohammedan."

CHAPTER NINE

MISSIONS of every sect and creed abound in Abyssinia. Whether they do any good merely proselytizing is not for me to say, but the Emperor not long ago forbade any missions to penetrate into the interior unless they were accompanied by a fully qualified doctor of medicine and the missions acted in the capacity of medical missions. This is all to the good. A new hospital and asylum for lepers has recently been opened in Addis Ababa by the Sudan Interior Mission, and financed by American money, although there are quite a number of New Zealanders on the staff. Then there is the American Medical Mission, with its up-to-date hospital on the outskirts of the capital, and with branches in the interior. This institution, of long standing, has done, and is doing, untold good in a country where primitive methods of curing disease are still practised, owing to the lack of modern medical methods.

The natives have a cruel cure for rabies; it is a case of kill or cure, but I believe the cures are quite common. They also have their own remedy for syphilis, which is widespread throughout the country. In other countries where the mere word is taboo in decent society, in Abyssinia it is almost as common as the use, say, of the word "tuberculosis." This complaint is the cause of the small families, and if the women of Abyssinia ever press for their rights, especially in the matrimonial customs of the country, this will be one of the first planks in their cause. The educated Abyssinian woman is already conscious in this direction, and the Abouna is working wholeheartedly, but so far the results have been disappointing.

Typhus, too, is very common in the country. Smallpox is endemic, and the natives have their own drastic form of vaccination; if the vaccination is survived the chances of catching smallpox are extremely remote. There was a scare in Addis Ababa one year, and we insisted on the whole staff of servants being vaccinated; without any demur they attended and were duly "punctured" by the German doctor called in for this purpose. Not until the last man was being done did they disclose the fact that everyone of them, on their own initiative, had been vaccinated only the week before! It is surprising what little notice the Abyssinian takes of this dreadful complaint, and how they will continue with their ordinary life and work whilst in the worst stages of the disease. We counted six people once, in our own compound and in the office, with this complaint. In the scramble of arrival at Dire Dawa my good man was handing our suit-cases through the windows of the carriage to *guragis* waiting below, and he was on the point of handing out my dressing-case to an expectant youth down below when I restrained him. The youth was obviously in the most repulsive form of the complaint, and how he was able to get about at all, or do any work, was quite beyond my comprehension.

Fetich marks on the faces of human sufferers, as well as on the sides of cattle and animals, supply evidence of the continued faith in these as cures for ailments of all kinds. Pneumonia, too, is very common in the highlands, and is generally fatal. I always asked that if I should get this in Addis Ababa I should be sent down without delay to a lower level, by aeroplane if necessary.

We had rather an unusual experience with one of our syces. It took some considerable time before we could persuade any of the servants to consent to being sent to hospital when they were ill. They were all under the impression that they were sent to hospital only to die.

After two or three cases from our compound had been treated by the American hospital, and returned to us completely cured, there was very little objection. At any rate when one syce, his wife and child were all down with typhus and pneumonia we rushed them off to the hospital. Whilst there the wife died, and the authorities thought it unwise to advise Damassie, the syce, of the death, as he was then in a critical stage himself, and delirious. Foolishly a visitor informed him. Ill as he was, and semi-conscious, he demanded to be allowed to leave, but naturally the doctor would not hear of it. He became violent in his delirium, and it was necessary to restrain him in a strait-jacket.

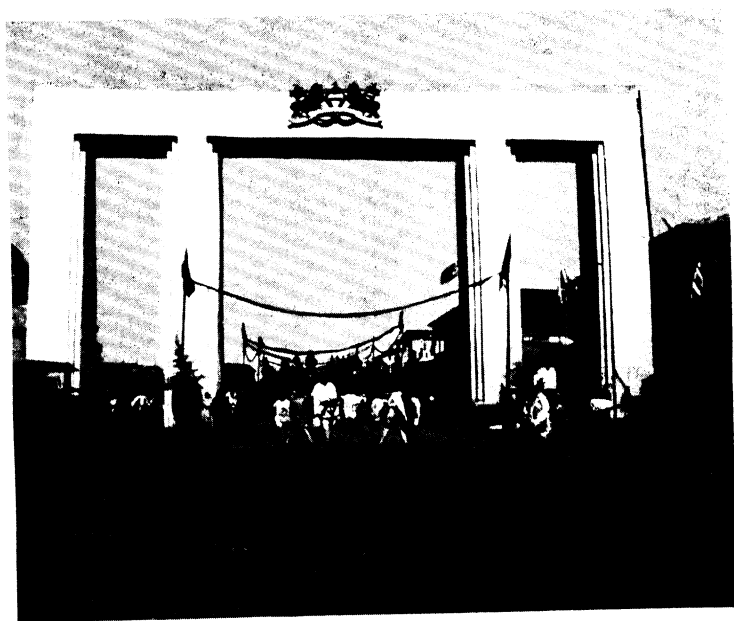
Next morning the hospital matron 'phoned to me to say that Damassie had got out of his strait-jacket, and had escaped during the night from the hospital, and that, in his critical state, he was bound to die. There was nothing we could do, we could not search the countryside for him, and we accepted his death as a fact. Months after I was asked one day by one of the house-servants to go outside. There to my amazement stood Damassie, looking as robust as ever. I could not help exclaiming, "But, Damassie, you are dead!" He wasn't by any means, and had come for the few effects he had left and to ask that I should obtain his clothes from the hospital. The doctors and hospital staff were as incredulous as I had been, that Damassie could possibly be alive, and suggested that it was a relation posing as Damassie—but it was the man himself. He had been my personal syce and I never went out riding without him, and very often when I walked out by myself Damassie was my escort.

Naturally I wanted him back, and when he said he was without work he was taken on again, there and then, and remained with us until we left the country. I could never get him to say anything as to the hospital incident

—except that he was starved there. I understand the diet in typhus, and of course in pneumonia, is on the light side. It appears, however, that when he had been put into the strait-jacket he “played possum”; when all was quiet in the ward that night he wriggled out of the jacket, sneaked out of the hospital, and walked back to his village, twenty miles or more away from the hospital! And this ill as he was, and in a critical condition. It proved the stamina of the man. He was treated by his relations in the village and cured! His child recovered in hospital, and was often to be seen playing in our compound afterwards.

We were always being told that the Abyssinians, especially domestic servants, had no sense of loyalty, but I can honestly say that my experience of my servants does not confirm this. I would not mind taking on a bet that if our fortunes ever take us back to Abyssinia our old servants would be waiting for us, and would carry on with their work as if there had been no break.

When we came home on one occasion we let our house furnished to a French family (*en passant*, never again), and our tenant agreed to keep on the whole staff. When my husband returned in three months—I was to follow later—he found that only one servant, and that a young house-boy, out of the whole staff had stayed on. It was curious that once an Abyssinian servant had served in an English household he would not, willingly, take a job in a household of another nationality. When my husband resumed possession of the house and set up a bachelor establishment every servant, including the night-watchman, presented himself for duty. My husband had taken no steps whatsoever to find the old servants. All servants in Abyssinia have to be guaranteed, and the *wases* (guarantors) are responsible for the good conduct of the servants and are supposed to make good any loss by theft. I had the good fortune never to call upon the



(Above) The Emperor at the Coronation Review
(Below) One of the archways made of canvas and wood,



The review of the Emperor's troops at the Coronation

wases for my servants, which was perhaps just as well, as I never heard of a *was* making restitution.

Our *zbagnah* (night watchman) was an extraordinary old thing and a character. Where he came from I was never able to find out, and he never presented a reference. He just presented himself to us, with a *was*, when we first arrived in the country and asked to be given a job. He was personally unknown to any of the other servants, but the *was* appeared to be an old friend, and there was much chattering and laughter. What actually transpired I do not know, except that I found the old man installed as our night-watchman, and he, too, remained with us all the time we were in Abyssinia. He spoke only a few words of Amharic—no Arabic as far as I could make out; he made no attempt to learn any more, and the servants could make nothing of him and laughed openly at him. He may have been a murderer or a lunatic at large so far as I knew. Whatever he may have been, he was a good watchman, and, although I maintained he was a sleeping watchman, we were singularly free from robberies, trespassers and disturbances generally, during the night.

We first gained his undying devotion by sending his little daughter to hospital when she was dangerously ill, and restoring her to him cured. We knew nothing as to his family ties (he did not live in the compound), and I did not know even if he were married until he appeared one morning with a tiny girl in his arms. The little mite was obviously ill and with a high temperature, so I put the two of them into the car and packed them off to the hospital with a note.

For months at a time I had nothing to do with him, except to pay him each month, until one morning, when we were visiting the stables, I caught sight of him hobbling about the compound. As he came on duty at dusk and had generally vanished by dawn, seeing him so late in the morning caused me to ask what brought

him there at that time of day. He had hurt his foot and wanted the "matey" to look at it. I told him to get along to the house and wait for me, and if I had known what to expect I certainly should have had my breakfast first, and kept him waiting a little longer. He had "bashed" his big toe some days previously and had used some native medicine or had ignored it completely. When he showed it to me it was unrecognizable as a toe and was septic and almost gangrenous.

Fortunately there was hot water in the kitchen, so I commandeered it and poured it direct on to the foot, making him scrub the toe to get rid of the dirt and medicine. He did it stoically—and I discovered that the water had only just come off the boil! I learned afterwards that the highland Abyssinian can bear hot water without apparently noticing it. I have seen them put their hands into water, and have seen water spilled on their bare feet, at a temperature that most certainly would have badly scalded a European. I suppose it must be due to their thin blood and eternally cold extremities that enable them to stand this. Shaking hands with an Abyssinian, of whatever rank he may be, is like holding a dead wet fish!

When the *zbagnah's* toe was visible I made him wash it further, in my presence, with strong disinfectant. When I was satisfied that it was clean I gave him a bandage, with a piece of cloth well smeared with iodized ointment, watched him wrap up the toe, and gave him instructions to bathe the toe as often as he could in hot water, and to report to me again next morning. I found him the following day sitting patiently on the veranda with the offending toe in a *Wills' cigarette tin* of hot water! He wasn't going to waste water, or wash the whole foot, when bathing that foot daily and applying ointment to the toe, only the toe required to be soaked. It took some weeks but I am proud to say that I made a complete cure,

although part of the toe was missing when it had healed, and I had the satisfaction of seeing the *zbagnah* walking about again normally.

Although we often found our *zbagnah* sleeping, and on occasions hopelessly drunk, he was always "on the spot" when least expected. When drunk he was decidedly funny, jabbering away in an unknown language, and always wanting to get down to kiss my feet when he met me. It generally ended by one of the other servants escorting him to his "sentry box" where he slept! I had not been feeling very well one night, and I wanted some brandy, which was kept in the store cupboard on the back veranda, so my husband went along for it. Whilst he was fumbling with the keys to the cupboard he heard a patter of footsteps behind him, and before he could turn the *zbagnah* was upon him, with his cruel-looking dagger up against the small of his back. My good man shouted and the *zbagnah* fortunately recognized his voice and dropped the knife. We had left the *zbagnah* sleeping when we made our usual tour round the house before retiring to bed. I firmly believe blood would have been shed if the old man had not recognized the voice of his *gaeta*.

Our bedroom had a communicating door leading into the spare bedroom, and one night I woke suddenly to a persistent scratching on this door. I listened intently and decided it was only a rat. We threw everything handy and movable at the door but that didn't stop the noise for long. When I could stand it no longer I insisted that my husband should make a hunt, and very sleepily the good man with an electric torch, and armed with a stout stick, searched the spare room, but there was no sign of the rat. We had no sooner got to sleep again than the scratching was resumed. This time I bravely accompanied my husband into the room, and we caught sight of the beastly little thing. With my "nightie" tucked

well above my knees, we chased it from corner to corner. At one moment it was sitting on the knob of the brass bed-rail. My husband brought his stick down with all his force—the rat had disappeared, but the knob was flattened out! We searched that room thoroughly, but there was no sign of a rat, and we gave up the hunt in disgust.

Next morning I told the house-boy there was a rat in the room, and he had better find it. The three house-boys after an hour came back, the head-boy, with the ghost of a smile on his face, saying there was no sign of a rat. The house-boys must have thought we had been “seeing things.”

That night, however, the scratching was resumed; there was evidence on the door where the rat had been trying to nibble his way through, so once again we started the search. There it was, peeping at us from a corner of the bed; we approached it stealthily with murder in our hearts, and glittering eyes. Once again it disappeared, only to come up, this time, on top of the mirror on the dressing-table smiling, as it seemed to us, in his knowledge that we dare not touch him while he was there. It was no use; the two of us could not get him, so I had a brainwave and sent my husband to call in the *zbagnah* to help. He was standing at the back door wondering, no doubt, what all the commotion was about. My husband could not make him understand what he was wanted for, and he would not enter the house, so my husband got him by the hand and dragged him, protesting, inside and into the room. He was scared stiff, and could not make out what new game the matey and *gaeta* were playing at that time of night, and in those clothes; anyhow all the English were mad. There he stood with a sheepish grin on his face while we continued the search.

Fortunately, at last, we raked the intruder out from under the wardrobe, and he rushed across the foot of the

zbagnah, who, while he leaped into the air, caught sight of the rat, and then he threw himself into the game with heart and soul. Three of us to catch one rat in a room, fifteen feet square! After what seemed hours a well-aimed blow caught the horrid little thing on the dressing-table, and laid him out, but the dressing-table top was badly dented! Our reputations were saved, and next morning when the room had been cleaned up and tidied, and the carcass disposed of, our prestige was restored with the head-boy bringing the dirty-linen bag to us to show where the rat had hidden. The bottom of the bag was completely eaten through. I wish I could have drawn a picture of the night's operations—matey with her nightie tucked up, the *gaeta* in pyjamas and bare feet, the *zbagnah* in his dirty smelly clothes and burnous with projecting rifle cover, whilst the torch in my hand threw dancing shadows on the walls. I don't like rats, especially the big Abyssinian rat; they are nasty things, and I always imagine they carry germs of foul diseases, like plague.

Fortunately there are no venomous snakes in the uplands. There are a few harmless grass and water snakes, but I never saw a snake all the time I was in the country. There are other crawling things, however, to make up for this loss. Fleas! If a flea were within a mile it invariably found me. They were picked up everywhere, and in the most unexpected places; in the grass in the garden; from mud floors of huts, and to me were a perfect pest and nuisance. Our rooms were continually sprayed with Flit and other insecticides of the same nature, but these only rendered them unconscious, and when they recovered they vented their spite on me. We had a rug and pouffe made from *goreiza* monkey-skins, and the long hair of these were the happy hunting ground for any stray fleas that got into the house. Regardless of decorum and the company present, when I got a flea

on me I just looked for it. I got really expert at finding and killing them. I have had my stockings almost black with the little things when I went into an unoccupied house, and even in riding-boots I have not been immune. Then there were the little things which are not mentioned in polite society. When I was staying at Dire Dawa they used to come through the cane work of the chairs in the hotel veranda, make their presence felt on my arms, and disappear again. I had to spray the chairs and cover them with towels before I could sit in them with comfort. How I envied those with thicker hides or less appetizing blood!

There are also "jiggers"—minute little things that get in under your skin, generally under the toe or fingernails. In Amharic they are called *moyale*, and are said to have been introduced into Addis Ababa from the Sudan and Kenya. There is a place on the Kenya border known as Moyale. When these have safely embedded themselves under your skin they lay their eggs and cause considerable irritation. An inexperienced person in attempting to get them out either leaves the bag behind, or bursts it, and the eggs hatch out and scatter, gradually extending the point of irritation. Even a European doctor, who knows the ways of jiggers, will recommend that the extraction should be done by an Abyssinian, or other native. They are expert in removing the bag complete, their only instruments being a pin, or, if they are fortunate, a needle.

CHAPTER TEN

THERE are many varieties of monkeys to be found in Abyssinia, from the handsome *goreiza*, with his long white hair and medallion of black, to the little *toto*, a most amusing little creature, for all the world like a wizened shrunken old man with a fringe of white whiskers. At the Monkey River, near Dire Dawa, there is a spot where hundreds of baboons of every size and colour, stately old gentlemen, mothers with babies clinging on to their necks, frolicsome young things, come down from the neighbouring hills for their morning drink. The parade is led by a patriarch, and, having drunk their fill, the elders sit around, as if in conference, whilst the youngsters play around. As if at a given signal they return from whence they had come. It meant an early start and a long march of over five miles over the boulders of the dry bed of the river, but I am glad I was able to be an eyewitness of this spectacle, and, after an impromptu breakfast of tea from a flask and biscuits, I did not mind the walk back of another five miles. I was also fortunate in being able to see baboons at play near the Mugger River, about forty-five miles north of Addis Ababa.

The *goreiza* is rarely found about Addis Ababa, as his home is on the Western border, but the market for his skins is in Addas, and I have seen, literally, hundreds of these pelts, practically all destined for America where they are in great demand for trimming of winter coats. I must admit they are very effective and becoming, but consider the cruelty—hundreds slaughtered at fashion's demand. I understand, however, that an attempt is

being made to put an end to the indiscriminate killing of these pretty animals. *Goreizas* are very delicate creatures and no successful effort has yet been made to keep them in captivity in Europe. A German firm offers a reward of £25 for each *goreiza* that lives six months, and this is increased to £100 if it lives for a year. It is the European winter they cannot stand.

I had heard monkeys make very amusing pets. A friend kept three or four different kinds and I was never tired of watching their antics. He had one very delicate and rare kind which, however, died from pneumonia, through being left out in a sudden shower of rain. He also had a *gingero*, the common kind found all over Africa, but the prize of his collection was the little *toto*. He was allowed to roam about the house and he and I soon became friends. When I called he used to sit on my shoulder and very carefully go through my hair, to see if he could find anything, and examine my ears. On one occasion whilst we were talking and had put our drinks on the floor, the *toto* was suddenly missing—and all our glasses had been emptied! We searched the house and eventually found him in the store-room where his food was kept. He had gorged himself, and as he heard our footsteps approaching he filled his mouth, until both his cheeks were bulging. Even his round little “tummy” was swollen. He must have crammed himself and made the most of the golden opportunity. When he was removed and brought back to the room in which we were sitting he was a ludicrous sight. He was under the influence of three whisky-and-sodas and was rolling about in a helpless fashion, yet retaining all he had put into his mouth. I could not help laughing.

It was in similar circumstances that I felt I should like a monkey as a pet, and eventually I succumbed to the desire—but never again. He was very young and full of mischief. He was always getting loose, and was most

destructive in the garden, pulling up plants and flowers. One morning I spied him amongst my cherished peas, and he had been there apparently some time. When I finally went out to view the damage, he had very carefully opened all the pods and taken out the contents and eaten them. He disappeared over the hedge when we tried to catch him and learned later that he had made a series of visits to our neighbours. In one house he had penetrated to the bathroom and had sampled the tooth-brushes. He had also paid a visit to our little English church and had romped about the pews, collecting the hymn-books and stacking them in a corner. Fortunately he had done no serious damage. His great friend was our night-watchman, with whom he slept most nights.

Although I was amused by his pranks I could never persuade him to make friends with me, and I finally was glad to give him away to a neighbour, where he was happy with a puppy. It was a pretty sight to see the two of them playing together, the monkey, although young itself, assuming quite a paternal air, taking the puppy into his embrace as if to protect him from the outside world.

Animals are very cruelly treated by Abyssinians. This is in no way, I believe, due to any desire to inflict pain, but because the Abyssinian has no feeling and has no sense of mercy, even to his fellow men. He can become very fond of animals, and, I know, he is particularly fond of children. I would like to have taken under my protection all the animals I saw being cruelly treated, but I should not have known where to stop, and the compound would soon have been overcrowded with my pets. As it was, what with the horses, fowls, donkey, children and even a tame duck, the compound was lively enough.

My duck came into the menagerie in rather a quaint way. I had forgotten to order our Christmas turkey in

time, and there was not one to be had in Addis Ababa for love or money. There were plenty at Dire Dawa, but there was not time to get one sent up by train, so I instructed our *transitaire* at the station to get me a goose. There had been a demand for these and the price had been rushed up to \$60 (nearly £4) each, and I was not prepared to pay this for any goose, so cancelled the order, comforting myself that we had a tinned boned turkey in our larder. Christmas dinner, to my mind, especially abroad, without goose or turkey is not the same.

To my surprise on Christmas Eve what looked like a goose was delivered at our house, a consolation gift from the *transitaire* for not being able to get a goose. It was a white Abyssinian duck, larger than the average English duck but not quite so large as a goose. As I had already issued the tinned turkey to the cook, there was no need to kill the duck, and it was allowed to run about the compound. That duck took a fancy to me—we called it Horace—and it would waddle up to me, quacking vigorously, every morning to be fed, and it followed me like a dog about the compound.

My husband had to make periodical visits to Djibouti and I always went with him, not only because it was not safe, as we thought, that I should be left alone in the house, but to give me a change from the effects of the altitude. It is advisable to get down to lower levels from time to time to give the heart a rest. I had been away on one of these visits, and on my return to Addis Ababa found Horace, much to my regret, with a broken leg. The servants saw nothing in letting him trying to waddle on one leg, and of course had not thought of destroying him in case I should want to know what had happened. He had to be destroyed, but I could not bear the thought of his being served up for dinner.

On another occasion my husband had to go down to Djibouti, but I could not accompany him. Friends were

willing to have me for the evenings and nights, but we had made no definite arrangements, when the Railway Company rang up to say that a special fast train was leaving in less than an hour. There was no time to be lost, but before leaving my good man called up the head-boy and made him responsible for my well being. That night I went out to dinner with our nearest friends and to make the necessary arrangements, if I found I could not stand the house alone. It was all right during the day, but I thought the long evenings would be terrifying.

After dinner I returned home, and as I approached, a white figure rose up on the veranda, followed by another and still another, until I got actually on to the veranda and found to my amazement that the head-boy had marshalled the whole staff, inside and outside, to sleep on the veranda as my guard whilst the old *zbagnah* patrolled all night long. This was done every night, so I made no further arrangements. I had no qualms with that guard round me and slept alone in the house for the whole period of my husband's absence, but confess that it was "creepy" going round last thing locking up and seeing that everything was secured, and I would not do it again willingly. A revolver was always kept handy, carefully under lock and key, but I have never been happy with firearms. I have fired a revolver, strictly under my husband's tuition, but I always shut my eyes and turned my head away when the beastly thing went off, so a revolver in an emergency would have been of little use to me. I placed much more faith in a heavy, powerful electric torch which was always by our bedside. The torch itself was a formidable weapon, whilst the beam it threw was powerful enough to be blinding at short range. I have seen the effect of it upon prowling wild animals in our compound.

We went to bed most nights to the serenade of jackals, hyenas, wild dogs, pi-dogs, etc., roaming about the river

bed below us in search of food. Jackals I didn't mind; the mournful "laugh" of hyenas sent cold shivers down my back, and if I woke to their dreadful noises during the night it took me a long time to fall off asleep again, as I generally waited for the next laugh. The dogs, both wild and pi, were continuously fighting, and I hated the noise of their snarling and wished it could be a case of "dog eat dog" and the pi be wiped out.

The pi-dogs of Addis Ababa, hairless from mange and more than half-starved, are vicious, and, as they are generally to be met at night in packs of half dozen or more, their near presence is to be avoided. They are cowards, and we found our torch flashed upon them an effective means of keeping them at a distance even if they did not scurry off. They, however, serve one useful purpose: they act as scavengers in the town, eating all the refuse, dead bodies, etc. Needless to say, there is no properly directed system of scavenging by the authorities. From time to time, generally after the rains, the authorities wage war against the "pies" and poison them off. For days after numbers of these bloated carcasses may be seen lying about in the streets, all surrounded by a curtain of flies and waiting to be collected.

To continue, however, with my "pets"—a much more pleasing topic. There was one pet of mine which turned out a complete failure, and that was "William the Silent" a grey African parrot. We bought him in Djibouti from a Somali and he was guaranteed to be a talker. No cage was available in Djibouti, so we took him up to Addis Ababa in a coffee basket. Although we fed him on tinned apricots he ate his way through his temporary cage and led us a dance both on the train and at Harwash, where we stayed the night.

In Addis Ababa we had a cage made specially for him by a tinsmith. I was vague about dimensions and glibly

mentioned a metre square. When it was delivered it looked like a model cathedral; the four sides, each a metre in width and depth, tapered up and the whole contraption was about five feet high and took up the best part of one side of our back veranda. He must have been quite a young bird when we first got him, as his beak was quite soft, but later it brought many a drop of blood where he nipped me on the fingers. We passed his cage many times a day, and each time we passed we said, "Speak, d—— you, speak," but he only squawked in reply and never a word did we get out of him—hence "William the Silent." His staple diet was bread and milk, and he adored nasturtium seeds and flowers, and we couldn't get him to touch anything else. He was a miserable abject costly failure as a pet, and I wasn't at all sorry when a friend agreed to give him a home.

When the coronation of the Emperor in 1930 was approaching we were warned that, owing to the expected influx of visitors for the ceremony, there might be a shortage of food in the capital, so, in addition to stocking our cupboard we bought some young fowls and ducks, with the idea of fattening them up. The fowls were left to roam about the compound, but the ducklings, about a dozen of them, were put into a wired enclosure, and, fed by us on barley for three months, they grew into respectably big birds fit for the table.

We had been away again, on one of our usual visits down the line, and immediately on our return home I wandered down to the stables, passing the duck enclosure on my way. I stood there gazing, amazed and speechless. Yes, there were twelve ducks, sure enough, but they were ducklings again, when I had left big fat ducks. What could have happened? I called up the syces. No, they saw nothing different, and what was the matter? Weren't there a dozen ducks, the same number I had left? Gradually I got to learn the truth—my fat ducks

had been sold during our absence at a dollar each and had been replaced by fresh ducklings at a total cost of a dollar for the dozen, the syces making a clear profit for themselves on the deal. They could see no wrong in it!

Barley for the horses had to be carefully watched, as it had a mysterious manner of disappearing if we were at all lax. Not only is barley used by Abyssinians as food for themselves, but it also makes their local beer known as *talla*. We knew almost to a "feed" how long each sack of barley should last, and for this reason we were present at most feeding times to ensure that the horses got their proper allowances. It would not have been beyond the syces to have "pinched" for their own use the feeds for the horses. There was never a truer proverb than "The eye of the master makes the horse fat."

Although we gave the servants living in the compound the utmost freedom as to their establishment and quarters it was certainly expecting too much of us to close our eyes to the syces' quarters being used as a drinking-den. From time to time I had noticed strange Abyssinians going through the compound, all proceeding towards the stables. When I inquired as to who they might be I was told they were Yehi's or Damassie's (two of the syces) relations or friends who had come in with a caravan from the interior. My suspicions were not aroused until one day when the syce on duty was not to be found. We eventually discovered him hopelessly drunk, lying amongst the litter in a corner of the stables. When roused he was incapable of standing and collapsed under one of the mangers, where he was allowed to lie.

That night the *zbagnah* reported to us, through our head-boy, that there were a lot of "bad men" in the compound, and accompanied by all the other servants, and prepared for any trouble, we made a sudden descent upon the syces' quarters. In one of the quarters the syce

appeared to be entertaining a large party, and there was much loud laughter and chattering going on. Lighted only by a primitive lamp, made from a piece of twisted cloth soaking in oil contained in a cigarette tin, the room was a veritable thieves' kitchen. It was a villainous-looking crowd gathered in there, and we counted in all fifteen men and women, all strangers, to whom the syce and his wife were retailing *talla* at a pesa a horn.

As my husband and the *zbagnah* entered the room there was a sudden silence and one or two figures sneaked out, only to be held up outside by the other servants. Without ceremony the rest of the crowd was hustled out, and marched off the premises in double quick time, whilst the jar of *talla* was brought outside and broken. This particular syce resented the raid and became sulky and insolent and neglected his work. One morning my husband had occasion to find fault, genuinely, over the way a saddle had been cleaned. The syce was drunk and approached in a threatening manner. Although we were good to our servants, and overlooked their drinking propensities, this could never be allowed. As he came up my husband greeted him with a hard punch straight on the mouth, knocking out a tooth, and as he still came on my husband gave him what, I think, is described as an "upper-cut." It toppled the syce over and the others led him away, and within an hour he and his wife, and their goods and chattels, were out of the compound—sacked! He later got a job with another Englishman who, on meeting us one day, told us that, thanks to our training, the syce was a marvel for an Abyssinian at his work when sober. He, however, continued his frequent drinking bouts, and during these times his wife carried on with the work in the stables.

The native, whether in Africa, Asia, or China, must be made to realize that his master—I am speaking only of Englishmen—is "top dog" in every way. The typical

Englishman abroad is just, patient, and lenient to his servants and generally puts up with a lot, but he will not be fooled with. There are times when "rough-housing" is not only necessary but essential, and the theory of "the iron hand inside the velvet glove" put into practice.

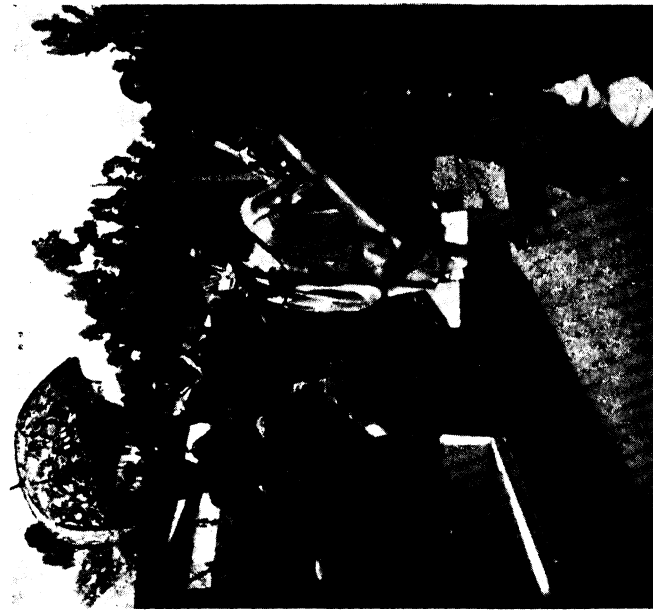
From time to time my husband had to "man-handle" some of the servants, not only in the house but also in business, which at times employed over fifty real hard cases, but I can honestly say that he never did so without real justification. That this was realized by the servants themselves is shown by the fact they never resented the punishment meted out to them, which they knew they had deserved, and those who were "sacked" were always eager to re-enter our service and were glad to be back.



H.R.H. the Duke of Gloucester arriving at Addis Ababa. The Foreign Minister is in the foreground in native dress



The Emperor driving along the racecourse



The Emperor visiting the churches in his car

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FOR centuries, long before civilized man tried to put a stop to slave-traffic, the Danakil tribe on the eastern border of Abyssinia has played an important part in the business and has derived from it a very considerable part of their revenue. This trade has been carried on as contraband, as Abyssinian law, whilst recognizing domestic slavery as an institution, has frowned on the traffic as a means of gain and has expressly forbidden the export of slaves. A slave must not be sold for money, as he is considered an integral part of the family, and to dispose of a slave the owner can only offer him as a gift.

The slave-trade was carried on between the highlands of Ethiopia and Arabia, and nearly all local chiefs took part in the traffic—very much in secret, though. When Abyssinia applied for membership of the League of Nations she undertook to do away with this traffic, and as a preliminary step abolished slavery within the borders. The death penalty was instituted for active participation in slave-dealing and severe penalties threatened upon those chiefs who permitted slave-caravans to cross their territories. The condition of the country, however, its vast extent, the lack of a powerful central authority, lack of easy communications, and immense stretches of wild country, have made the enforcement of these laws not only difficult, but almost impossible. The late Sultan of Jimma has been deposed for taking part in the slave-traffic and a British official appointed as Minister for Slavery, but the task of stamping out the trade is difficult.

The trade continues, however, in a small way and under the most secret and difficult conditions. Small groups of two or three at a time are brought from the Sudan, across country, and embarked on fast sailing *dhows* along various points of the desolate and forbidding Danakil coast. The attitude of the slaves themselves constitutes one of the chief obstacles in wiping out this trade, as they are willing victims and co-operate with their owners. They pretend to be part of the crew of the boat they are on, and it is difficult in these conditions to detect their presence. When a "slaver" has the misfortune to meet a suspicious-looking craft, a tarpaulin is thrown over the "cargo," who lie in the bottom of the boat while the crew of the slaver walk about unconcernedly over their bodies under the tarpaulin as if there was nothing more under it than dates or dried fish. The "cargo" do not object; they know they will be far better off as slaves in Arabia than eking out a miserable existence in their own barren land.

Little can be extracted in the way of taxes and levies from certain tribes living in the desert regions and constantly on the verge of famine. They own few cattle, pasture is scarce, and they cultivate little or no grain. Yet they are prolific and sturdy, and it is these tribes that supply the larger part of the material for the slave-markets. Young men and girls offer themselves willingly, or are offered by their parents, to the party delegated by the local chief to secure slaves as payment in lieu of taxes. The chief has no objection to flesh and blood in payment, whilst the tribes themselves accept this arrangement willingly, as they too derive advantage and profits from this method of collection. The families of the future slaves, the headman of the village, all receive a minimum payment for the lot. There is a premium for youth and good looks, and the choice is considered almost an honour, whilst the "slaves" themselves declare them-

selves ready to leave their country for rich foreign lands.

For generations the tribe inhabiting the country adjoining the desert regions, and whose stone towers mark the frontiers, have been the principal slave-merchants, obtaining their slaves principally from amongst the Wallamos or Guragis. As these are taken over from their escorts they are shut up for the time being, in underground rooms specially built for that purpose, until sufficient numbers have been collected to make up a caravan for the coast. The willing captives are then escorted across the Danakali frontier, and a tax paid to every chief whose territory they have passed through. At the frontier the Danakils take over the caravan and escort it down to one of the coast towns and hand it over to Arab traders who have come across specially for this purpose, bringing with them cotton goods, rifles, etc., to be exchanged. It is very seldom that the Danakils themselves take their cargo across to Arabia.

In Arabia there are usually three kinds of slaves offered: women, labourers, and young "eunuchs." The women are selected for their youth, figures, and good looks, and are destined for the harem, where they assume a position which they cannot hope to attain in their own land. Their value was about \$300. They become concubines, in some cases wives, of the owners, and bear legitimate sons and daughters, not slaves as they themselves have been.

The largest portion of a caravan is composed of young able-bodied men, and they are generally at prices ranging about \$400, bought for their potential use as gardeners or household servants in Arabia or Persia. They may have opportunities to learn a trade, such as basket and rope making, carpentry, etc., and are thus able to become useful members of a community, which is more than was possible in their earlier "free" days.

Children are seldom sold for more than \$100.

The third group, and by far the smallest portion of the caravan, is made up of castrated boys ranging from nine to fifteen years of age, and this is the worst side of the business. The process of castration, generally by witch doctors of the village and occasionally by their own parents, is cruel and the mortality is high, nearly 75 per cent of the patients dying through the operation itself, or the crude treatment given after. These boy eunuchs fetch high prices in the slave market, up to two thousand dollars each, and are treated accordingly as a valuable possession by their purchasers and in time become confidential servants, managing the household, treasure, etc. and never betraying the confidence reposed in them. They are not, as popularly supposed, bought for the sole purpose of guarding the harem. Many are sent to Mecca.

Famine and starvation are often at the bottom of a child being sold as a slave. We have been accosted whilst riding outside the capital by a woman who offered the babe, lying at her breast, in exchange for the where-withal to buy herself some food. On one occasion we had no money with us and were unable to give anything, and the woman offered herself and her child to our groom—anything for a certainty of having something to eat. Friends of ours have had many similar experiences. In 1929 the locusts were bad, everything green had been stripped, there was very little grain, and starvation loomed large in the low-lying districts. It was a pathetic sight travelling down the line, and the first-class carriages were besieged at every station with men, women and children, emaciated beyond belief, with their ribs almost breaking through their skins, crying out for something to eat. It was useless giving them money—there was nothing they could buy—so at one station most of the passengers bought great trays full of bread of every kind and handed these out at the various stations. It was not much, but it was all we could do.

When I have been home in England friends have shown me illustrations, cut from newspapers, purporting to be photos of slaves chained together and on offer in slave-markets. It has been difficult not to laugh, and more than difficult to convince them that these illustrations are not genuine. In the first case because I doubt very much whether a European, man or woman, would ever be allowed these days to enter a slave-market, if there are such things as are popularly imagined, especially with a camera. Secondly, I have recognized many of these pictures representing slavery as photos of criminal and dangerous prisoners. It is a common thing, early in the mornings or in the late afternoons in the capital, to come across a gang of men, sometimes women, walking along in pairs chained together. They are being taken to work or are being brought back from work. Sitting on the roadside during a halt, or during their meagre lunch-hour, they can be easily mistaken for slaves, and a newcomer or passer-through instantly jumps to the conclusion that they must be so, takes a hurried photo, and sends it home as an instance of the awful atrocities perpetrated in the country. I cannot call to mind having ever seen a "slave" in Addis Ababa, whereby he or she could be known as a slave; much less have I ever seen a slave-caravan. My information as to the slave-trade has been secured from reliable sources.

Another common sight, which may be mistaken for slavery, is a couple going along chained together. They are merely debtor and creditor. The creditor has made a claim which has been admitted, and until the debt is paid off, by relations or friends, the debtor is chained to the creditor. I have seen man and women thus chained, and it may be days before the debtor can be released. It is very primitive, I admit, but the country is still in as primitive a state as England was five hundred years ago. We have had our servants turning up at the house

chained, and as soon as they have obtained from me an advance of their pay, sufficient to pay off the debt, they have been released.

No one who has been in Ethiopia and met the Emperor or is well informed on Ethiopian affairs can doubt the good intentions of the Emperor as regards slave-trading, as well as reforms in other directions. He has taken certain steps and would have taken further had it not been for some of the die-hards who have opposed reforms, and internal and external disturbances. He would have been able, I feel sure, to overcome the obstruction to his reforms if his attention had not been distracted by other internal as well as external events since his coronation. First there was the trouble in Tigré; then the threat in 1931 from the South; followed in 1932 by the conspiracy of Ras Hailu, King of Gojjam, in connection with Lij Yassu; and more recently the action of Italy. Not only the attention of the Emperor, but the funds of the country have been absorbed for other purposes than internal reforms. Much sympathy must be felt for the Emperor in his present position—his earnest desire for the development of his country and reform having to give way to mobilize his country against an external threat.

Punishment is swift, and in many cases appropriate to the crime. I have seen beggars crying out for alms and showing stumps of their right arms. Their right hands have been cut off, as they have been convicted of theft. I cannot say whether the practice is still carried on—it used to be—of allowing the relatives of a murdered man to kill the murderer in the same manner as he killed his victim. It was often a matter of discussion between us as to how one would proceed if a man killed another by falling on top of him from a tree, or if a man were killed accidentally by someone playing golf. Recently there was a case of a brutal murder, by slow poisoning. The case was fully tried and the man sentenced to death,

and hanged on a tree near the station, and the body was left hanging. We had been riding out in the vicinity, but fortunately had not come across the body, but some friends of ours, who were not so fortunate, had seen it, and had wanted to take a photo of it but were not allowed to do so.

Public hanging of other murders has been put an end to, and the tree that was used for this purpose has been cut down. I believe that executions are carried out in quite an original manner, the relative or relatives of the murdered person still having the right to act as executioner.

There are certain rules and regulations in connection with prosecution for minor offences that make resource to law inconvenient and, perhaps, expensive, and this is probably a deterrent to going to law, as in many other Eastern countries. We had been calling on a friend in our swagger new car, and he accompanied us, when we were leaving, to see our new acquisition. Two Abyssinian youths had been playing in the street, and in accordance with their usual habit, were throwing stones at each other. Unfortunately a fairly large stone had missed its target but hit our radiator, and broken it and the water was running out. Our Abyssinian chauffeur had caught the offender and there was much weeping and noise as we appeared. In due course a policeman arrived on the scene and our chauffeur was very keen on handing the culprit over to the arm of the law. There was much talking and we learned that as the policeman had not been an eyewitness himself he must have a witness and the only one was the chauffeur, who must be chained up to the boy until the case could be tried. It might be one day, it might be one month. In the meantime the boy and the witness must be fed by the *gaeta*. So in addition to having our car damaged, we were to be without the services of our driver for an indefinite time, and have to

pay for the keep of both culprit and witness. It wasn't good enough, and it was decidedly cheaper and more convenient to take no further action in the matter. No insurance company does any motor insurance in Abyssinia as the risks are limited to the Addis Ababa Municipal limits and the risks are out of all proportion to the revenue that might accrue.

The main prison is in the heart of the town, and during the day crowds may be seen waiting outside the entrance with food to take to their relatives who may be imprisoned, as the State does not feed prisoners.

A former high Government official could have been seen at one time perambulating about in chains. He had held a very important post indeed but had succumbed to temptation and had accepted bribes. He was guilty only in that he had been found out! My husband had an amusing instance—he had business with a certain department which was transacted with the Chief of the department himself. Next day, to my husband's surprise, the Chief of this department walked into my husband's office. Every subject was touched upon, except the reason for this unexpected pleasure and honour. Very confidentially the subject was broached—would my husband lend sufficient money to buy a piece of land and build a house? It is the only way foreigners can own property in Abyssinia; the property is bought by an Abyssinian, and the foreigner takes a mortgage on it. Apart from the fact that my husband was not requiring any special favour or concession from the department, we had better use for our money than putting it into landed property in Abyssinia, and the loan was therefore not made. Next day there was another visitor—this time number two of the same department. The same ritual was gone through, and the last subject touched upon was a loan—this time, however, it was for so small and insignificant an amount that the "loan" was made, and

my husband said good-bye to it. Needless to say it was never repaid.

Perhaps, after all, the system of underpaying the Government officials and allowing them to accept bribes is an economy to the State. The expense to the Government is small, the official is seemingly content with a meagre salary but, of course, makes as much as he can out of bribes in as short a time as possible. The Government is aware of this and allows the offender to carry on and, when he has had sufficient time to amass a sum worth while, the Government "pounces" on him and confiscates not only his ill-gotten gains but also all his property. This may be an exaggeration, but it is well known that the official, whilst grossly underpaid, is yet able to live well, entertain hospitably, run motor-cars; and then he disappears and is replaced by someone else.

This bribery and corruption is not confined to the Government servants alone; it runs through every class and grade of business and ordinary life. We were having our rooms repapered and, when I remonstrated with the workman in charge, at the long delay and the time he was taking over the job, he glibly informed me that if I were to give him *backshish* he would finish the work quickly. When I refused, he dropped work altogether, and in the end I had to "tip" him—weak, I know, but my attempts, singlehanded, could not alter the time-honoured customs of the country.

Abyssinian servants in the employ of European households are supposed to pay a tax of one dollar a month; this is lieu of a day's work per month to the State. Naturally, very few of the servants pay the tax and the employers are called upon to pay it. If by any chance a *zbagnah* wishes to make a little money for himself he has only to call upon the servants of a European—preferably English—household, and to take upon himself the task of collecting the tax. Naturally there is a *chic-a-chic*

(row) and either the *zbagnah* is appeased with a small amount (borrowed from the mistress) or gets indignant and threatens to put the law into force. If he is discreet he retires immediately from the precincts of the house as no *zbagnah* or police is allowed, under any pretence, to enter the compound of a European householder unless he is specifically asked to do so by the householder himself. I was in bed, with a bad attack of "flu," the house and compound were quiet, when I was startled by a raucous squabbling taking place near the tennis-court. It persisted, and, as I could make no one hear, I went out on the veranda to see what it was all about. There were quite a lot of *zbagnahs* about, but they ran like a flock of sheep immediately they spotted my presence. I never could make out what they were doing on the premises or whom they were after.

Of course there is no fire brigade, and, if there were one, it would be of very little use without a regular water supply. Fortunately there have been few fires apart from *tukhuls*. When a *tukhul* catches fire it is simply allowed to burn itself out, but the adjacent *tukhuls* are pulled down to prevent the fire spreading. Until recently the Fire Insurance Companies doing business had few claims—the only claim being one for about £150 made by a soap factory. The record was, however, spoiled in 1929 when a European store was completely gutted and the whole loss, about £5,000, was completely covered.

The English companies were very conservative in accepting risks, but a French company opened up business, accepted any risk that was offered—most of them having been refused in the past by the English companies—and after one experience in 1933 has closed down this part of the business. I believe they had to pay out something like three quarters of a million francs. The fire originated in a baker's shop, and, as it was in a dangerous part of the town, the authorities ordered all

chiefs and notables to attend the fire with their followers, retainers and slaves, each carrying a stone. On arrival at the scene of the fire the followers threw their stones at the fire—the immediate effect was as if a large poker had been used. Lengths of fire hose were obtained but before the hose could be carried to the nearest available supply of water the fire was got under. Probably the avalanche of stones did effectually quench the fire in time. Fortunately the wind was in the right quarter and prevented the fire spreading—or the whole of the bazaar would have been gutted.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I WONDER if there is any other country in the world so difficult to trade in as Abyssinia. Not only are there the ordinary trading difficulties such as demand and supply, "tricks" of the dealers, but there is the complicated question of exchange. The coin of the realm is the Austrian Marie Theresa dollar (thaler) which must be dated 1780 (it need not necessarily have been minted at that date) and the native trader will not take any other. Menelik tried to introduce his own silver dollar, but it was a drug on the market and is hardly seen in circulation, except in the possession of an unsuspecting European to whom it has been passed. The Marie Theresa dollar is a real silver coin—not just a token coin—and weighs approximately an ounce; the value of it fluctuates according to the price of bar silver. I have known it as low as nine dollars to the pound sterling, and I have seen it reach twenty-two, nearly twenty-three, to the pound. Weren't we rich in those days? The servants had to be paid in silver dollars, and the daily market required dollars so that bringing back the necessary dollars for household requirements required a strong man to lift the bag containing them.

There can be no stability of the exchange, as the country is not rich enough to defend its currency or to "peg" its value as compared to other currencies. The dollar is therefore intrinsic wealth to the native, and, although an export licence has been necessary to export it, as silver, from the country, there has been, and will be, smuggling over the border. When silver was low in price and dollars were in the vicinity of twenty to the

pound, everyday articles imported from England were comparatively cheap expressed in dollars. When silver prices began to fluctuate prices of goods already in the country were changed almost daily, but I do not think the ordinary shopper ever reaped the benefit—shopkeepers did, however, especially the *bunniahs*. The *bunniah* in India is the moneylender and changer of currency, but in Abyssinia he is the curse of trade. He speculates in silver, using the dollar as a medium, and trading in produce becomes entirely dependent on the *bunniah*, who influences the rate of exchange, irrespective of the price of silver and the law of supply and demand. I think I can voice the opinion of all legitimate traders in produce in Abyssinia when I say that it would be all for the country's good if *bunniahs* were prohibited from Abyssinia, and the Bank of Ethiopia take upon itself the duty of fixing the exchange. The *bunniah*, however, conceals his activities in exchange under the cloak of being a dealer in cotton goods.

When the Emperor was appointing foreign officials as advisers to various departments he appointed an American as Financial Adviser. This gentleman, new to the country, by his proposed reforms and lack of essential knowledge as to conditions, glaringly so on a certain economic law, nearly drove my good man crazy, harassed as he continually was over this perpetual exchange question. I do not know what the particular law is, but I do know the Adviser proposed to introduce a token coin in place of the genuine silver dollar. It gave my good man a chance to protest strongly and loudly, and the proposal was dropped in consequence.

There are also half-dollars, quarter-dollars, and small silver coins of comparatively recent origin, one-sixteenth of a dollar, and known as a *timoon*. When first introduced it was difficult to get these small coins accepted, and their value as against the copper coinage varied from

day to day—my cook would not accept them for market. The timoon, however, made very good sleeve-links and salt-spoons and I had a number of them made up. When we left Abyssinia, however, these timoons were being freely accepted.

In unloading our heavy luggage the carrier was exceedingly careless, and I watched our cases, containing china and glass, literally being hurled off the back of the lorry in front of the office. Any glass or china that was left unbroken by the rough handling of the railway was broken in this last stage. Nearly all our ornaments, some of them old Sèvres and Crown Derby, were broken, including some hand-cut crystal finger-bowls. Fortunately our dinner service and table glass were packed by the manufacturers and came out whole, but it was quite impossible to replace the finger-bowls or to obtain anything that would do duty for them. Not even the brass bowls of Indian or Egyptian workmanship could be had. Of course our baggage, etc., had been insured, but not against breakage, and it was quite impossible to obtain any redress from the railway. The local carrier was, however, had up on the carpet, and he admitted liability—he was a witness himself as to how the cases were thrown out of the lorry. He paid an agreed-upon figure for his part of the damage, and, as I had had a brainwave during my exploration of the town, I took a hundred dollars in silver. During my walks I had come across a little shop where an Armenian was working in metals. With the hundred dollars, and an interpreter, I hastened round to this shop, and after a lot of demonstration, and explanation, I succeeded in getting the silver melted down and made into finger-bowls—and very handsome and useful finger-bowls they were too.

This Armenian was quite a good craftsman in metals, and I made a lot of use of him. Some Abyssinian gold came into my possession, and I got him to make a signet

ring for myself and a pair of cuff-links for my husband, with our initials, in a monogram, actually cut out! The work was very excellently done, and the edges of the cutting were so clean that they sparkled in the sun or electric light. They have been admired by all who have seen them. Abyssinian gold, I believe, is very hard to work.

The copper coin in general use is the *besa*. The correct word is *pesa*, but the Abyssinian, like the Arab, cannot pronounce the letter *p* so calls it *b*; the post office is known as *bosta*.

There are supposed to be thirty-two of these *besas* to a dollar, but when we first arrived in the country we could only get twenty-eight to a dollar. Sixteen timoons were thus supposed to be worth thirty-two *besas*, but thirty-two *besas* bought much more than their equivalent in timoons, the silver equivalent. I could not account for this variation in the *pesa* until I had been some time in the country. It appears that the copper, or bronze, required for these *pesas* is obtained by the State from Europe in the shape of discs. These discs are afterwards stamped with the effigy of the Emperor in the local mint. Now copper or bronze in the shape of discs costs only so much per pound weight. When stamped into *pesas* the same weight is transformed into the equivalent of many more dollars, an enormous profit thus accruing to the State.

These stamped discs were often handled by subordinate Government officials, and I could never ascertain whether they received them as pay, or collected them. At any rate they, too, made a profit by withholding them from circulation, but when they were "hard up" they let them loose on the market, and it was when these extra supplies were available that one got the legal number of *pesas* to the dollar. It was all very complicated at first.

Notes issued by the then Bank of Abyssinia were available, but they were in small demand, as the native trader and shopkeeper would not take them—they wanted silver thalers and nothing else. I suppose it was their lack of confidence in the Bank. Even those Abyssinians who should have known better had hazy ideas about banking. Until quite recently an Abyssinian thought that he withdrew from the Bank the identical dollars that he had paid in—in fact, that the Bank, when he paid in the dollars, set aside these dollars to be withdrawn only by that particular Abyssinian. They were, however, gradually being educated up to the use of bank-notes and were showing more confidence by accepting them, more or less freely, when we left the country. Gone are the days when one met a long string of *guragis* in the Bank Road, each carrying on his shoulder a bag containing a thousand dollars for some trader to pay for produce.

Recently the Bank of Abyssinia has been acquired by the State as a State bank, and is now known as the Bank of Ethiopia. As the Bank of Abyssinia it was, more or less, owned and controlled by the National Bank of Egypt; as the State Bank of Ethiopia it is controlled by a local board, although it has retained its connection with the National Bank of Egypt. The management, however, is entirely English—at least I should say British; and the Bank plays an increasingly important part in the finances of the State.

The pound sterling, too, plays an important part in the finances and trade of the country. English treasury and bank-notes were freely obtainable—I once obtained some cherished English sovereigns—and were looked upon as legal tender.

There were two other currencies, in addition to the Marie Theresa dollar and sterling, to be reckoned with in Abyssinia, and they were all at variation with each other. Pity the trader in Abyssinia, who has to deal with

at least four currencies. First of all he usually has his funds in sterling or francs. He has to convert these at the best possible rates, so as to get as many dollars as possible, to pay for the produce he has purchased. All labour expenses are also paid in dollars. The produce has to be railed to Djibouti—the rail freight is calculated in francs, and the labour expenses in Djibouti are also paid in francs. The goods are shipped and the sea freight is expressed in Indian rupees. The goods in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred have been sold at sterling prices, so have to be invoiced at sterling.

Long hours are spent in the offices in Addis Ababa. I won't go so far as to say that business is done at high pressure during all these hours, but a business man seems to spend most of the day in his office. Numerous callers, business and otherwise, accompanied by innumerable cups of coffee and cigarettes, absorb most of the time. There are no definite hours for business; cables and telegrams are delivered at all odd hours; and it is far more likely to find a business man at his office at 8 p.m., or even later, than it is to find him at home. My husband tried to institute a five-and-a-half-day working week, the office to be closed officially at noon on Saturday and all day on Sunday. It was hopeless. He would find his staff at the office when they were supposed to be off duty. I suppose as they had no interests outside their work, playing no games, they were just as happy in the office as elsewhere. During the rains, when no produce is coming in to the office, one would think that there would be nothing to do in the offices; on the contrary, they seem to be just as busy, doing nothing, as during the real busy season, from October to May. Immediately the rains are over produce traders start on a hectic time with *negadies* (native traders) coming in from the interior, with all kinds of produce, hides, skins, coffee, beeswax, civet, ivory, and even gold.

The usual course is to buy from the *dalals* (Arab brokers), but occasionally the exporter will try to buy direct from the caravans as they come in. The Arab broker seems to have the *negadies* in his power. He has generally made them an advance and they are pledged to bring their produce in to his compound. The caravans are met by the "touts" of the brokers well outside the town; the *negadies* are promised all sorts of high prices for their hides, coffee, etc., free quarters, food for the animals, and firewood. My good man tried to short-circuit the *dalal*, but he found this method more costly and considerably more inconvenient, and gave up after a short trial.

The caravans arrived in our office compound complete with mules, donkeys, ponies and bearing all kinds of produce. We were living at the office when the first trials were made, and I was most interested, but pained to see the state of their backs when the animals were unloaded. Most of them had raw, bleeding backs, and no attempt had been made to heal the sores or to ease the burdens. Quarters had to be found for all the men and animals, foodstuffs for both, firewood, and goods in the way of cotton materials, paraffin, soap, salt, etc., purchased, to be sold for cash or exchanged for produce. Everything the caravan carried had to be taken over; there was no picking and choosing. The noise, dirt and smoke can best be left to the imagination, and there were no silent hours during the night; the *negadies* apparently talk all night whilst they sit round the fires having their meals.

The Abyssinian, raw child of nature that he may be, is like the "heathen Chinees" for his wily ways and tricks. When crossing rivers he will dip the hides in the water, or rub them on the soft mud of the banks, so as to give them additional weight. He will want all the horns, hooves, weighed in with the hides and will call upon the

heavens as a much-injured man if he sees these being cut off before the hides are put on the scales. He will put vaseline, or even ground bananas, into the civet; he will mix small pebbles, husks, and broken beans in the coffee—no wonder the trader has to do business with both eyes open and his faculties alert. I remember once hearing how wool was tampered with from South Africa. Silver sand sprinkled in amongst the wool was common enough; once a dead chicken, complete with feathers, was found; but the prize was a hair mattress stuffed into the bale with the wool.

Abyssinian hides are good hides badly treated, and they are only attractive to the tanners in Europe and elsewhere when the price is sufficiently low. As the hides are being cleaned, sorted and selected and weighed, the *guragis* handling them keep up a perpetual chant, which sounds rather attractive. The labourers generally require a leader, and amongst my husband's staff there was a veritable Caruso of a selector—he always led them in their singing and their work. As the caravans may have taken anything from three weeks in their trek into the capital the hides, in spite of any soaking they may have received, become as stiff as boards and it requires four men to unfold them whilst a fifth man beats the hides vigorously with a stout stick to get rid of the dried earth and other dirt. Hides with noticeably large "fetish" marks are thrown aside for the time being. The hides are "book folded" into small compass so as to be easily carried by the donkeys. After being beaten they fold back like a spring, and are thrown upon the scales and the weight of the hides taken in a register, the chief *negadie* keeping a tally, too, of the weights.

The hides are then taken into the go-downs (warehouses), the number of hides being checked by another tallyman. It has often happened that whilst a fresh lot of hides are coming in at one entrance another lot are

being taken out for sorting as to weight, selecting as to quality, preparatory to baling and despatch for shipment. Each bale is roped and then pressed into as small a compass as possible, and when passed as ready for shipment the bale is marked with the shipping mark and numbered and a record kept for invoice purpose. All these various activities keep a small army of men busy during the season, and there is always something of interest to watch. Occasionally a man was hurt, and when we were at the office he was brought immediately to me for first aid treatment. I shudder to think what happened when I was not there; native treatment—very often cow dung—was applied to the wound.

The preparing and handling of sheep and goatskins was in quite a different category; the work was done much more sedately and quietly. Here again a different selector was required.

The coffee business was quite a gentleman's business, and, although many more tons were handled than other produce, it was all done very quietly. Buying direct from the *negadies* was comparatively an easy but risky matter. Samples could only be taken from various skin bags and an all-round price offered, varying for the coffees from the different provinces, all of which differ as to quality, size of beans, amount of dirt, etc., contained.

It was in connection with coffee that I saw my good man in a red-hot temper. He had been watching the weighing, when I saw him go up to one end of the scales, catch a poor inoffensive *guragi* by the neck and hurl him aside. The coffee had been taken out of the skin bags and put into gunny bags and were being weighed in these, an old sack being thrown in now and again amongst the weights in order to balance the sack containing the coffee which was being weighed. He had found that stones had been put in one or two of the sacks thrown in, and had given strict instructions that this was not to

be done. What had angered him was the discovery of a piece of string from one of the sacks, with the weights, hanging over the side of the scale being held down by the toes of one of his own *guragi*. Of course it was being done by the *guragi* under instructions from the weighers so as to get "more coffee for the house." His views, that it was open robbery, and might be done by Arabs and others, but wasn't going to be tolerated by an English firm, were not shared by those responsible for the weighing of the coffee. Everybody concerned knew it was a common habit, and it was, after all, for the good of the house.

Buying coffee through a broker was even more interesting. The broker came along to the office and produced, generally from among his loin-cloth, a sample, about two big handfuls, of the coffee he was selling. The coffee was sniffed at for mustiness, and a bean here and there picked out and bitten between the teeth, and then the coffee was carefully examined so as to arrive at an estimate of *dechét* (dirt, pebbles, husks, broken beans, etc.) that might be contained in the bulk of the coffee. A price was made by the broker, a hasty calculation made, and the coffee accepted or rejected. If accepted, the sample was retained whilst the coffee selector was sent off to secure the rest of the offered coffee and see it dispatched to the railway station, if a train were available, or to our go-downs if there was no train. All the cleaning, grading, mixing and preparation of coffee for shipment was done at Djibouti. It was a most interesting part of the business, and I never tired of watching the cleaning, etc., at Djibouti when I was down there. The Somali women, all ages, mothers with babes at their breasts, squat on the ground surrounded by coffee, which they put on to flat tray-like baskets, manipulate two or three times in the air, and then blow on vigorously. Throwing up the contents into the air brings the "dechét" to one

end of the tray whilst the dust and husks are blown off. It is a good thing for all concerned that the coffee beans themselves are roasted and that boiling water is used.

Civet, whilst a valuable commodity, is a most unpleasant article to have anything to do with. Packed in long horns, the only test for purity, apart from chemical analysis, is by smell. Long bladed flexible knives are put into the horn to reach the end, and the civet that is retained on the blade is carefully sniffed at. Ugh! The smell of it! Civet, with its clinging quality, is used as a basis for the most expensive perfumes, and so valuable is it that when it is shipped it is stored in the ship's bullion room.

Whilst trading in Abyssinia has its interesting, almost romantic, side, it can hardly be said to be profitable, owing principally to the difficulties of exchange. The difficulties as to tricks and wiles of the *negadie* can be countered, but the heavy duties and rail freight kill any worthwhile business. I was given to understand that between Jimma, in the south-west of Abyssinia, produce has to pay twelve octroi dues before it reaches the capital. Export taxes are high, too. There is a tax called *Kothi*. Nobody seems to know what this is, but from all I have been able to ascertain it was a tax levied by Menelik for guards provided for caravans going down to Dire Dawa where the railway ended. The railway carries the goods now, no guards are provided, yet the tax is still imposed. Then there is a school tax. How much of this goes to the upkeep of the schools? If the whole amount obtained from this source were applied to the schools they would be maintained entirely without calling upon the Emperor's private purse. Railway freights, too, are iniquitous, but again there is no remedy. The railway company has to grant so many concessions to the Government, so many free passes, that the trader must be bled to make up the deficit. If all concessions were

done away with, and free passes granted only to those who furnished a certain minimum of freight, rates could be reduced considerably.

My husband, coming home one year, took some of his luggage with him instead of sending it in advance by "goods train." Owing to the heavy rates for excess luggage, it was the usual custom to pack as much luggage as possible into the compartments—but he wasn't lucky this time. The excess rate he paid was incredible. One would not object to sending heavy luggage in advance if any dependence could be placed on the goods service. Goods may take anything from five days to three weeks in transit from Addis Ababa to Djibouti. Thefts were fairly frequent, too, in the goods van, but we were lucky—all we lost were the straps from our gladstone bag. Straps of all kinds are precious in Abyssinia. A former British Consul, leaving the country on transfer, had the misfortune to lose a valuable rug, stolen from his baggage. It was discovered some time later hidden under a bush alongside the railway. I had my first experience of the ways of the railway immediately upon our arrival in the country. When our personal luggage was brought from the station my cabin trunk was missing and in its place was delivered an old decrepit bag containing nothing but a lot of old moth-eaten books. I wanted my cabin trunk badly, as I needed many articles contained in it, but in spite of repeated visits by our *transitaire* it was not forthcoming. It ended by my husband making a personal call upon the director of the railway, when the trunk was found—and allowed to come through the Customs without being examined, not that there was anything in it to be declared.

I found the Customs authorities pretty good on the whole, when I got to know their ways. I never wrapped anything up in paper—their insatiable curiosity—they are like monkeys in this respect—always made them open

all packages wrapped in paper, and this always delayed matters.

Registered letters and parcels were supposed to be in a sealed van. We had some expensive books sent out from home, and we instructed the stores always to send these out by registered book post. The parcel duly arrived, but it was delivered in an unimaginable state: every book was crushed beyond hope and it looked as if the railway wheels had been over them. The matter was taken up officially with the railway, and they admitted a bag from the sealed van had been run over; but of course there was no redress. We learned later that the registered bag for the British Legation had also suffered in the same way. We could never make out how parcels from a sealed (!) van could have fallen on the line, and the railway authorities never offered to enlighten us. We claimed on our suppliers. They replaced the books and took the matter up with the British postal authorities. Many months after we received a letter asking us to move in the matter our end, as the British Post Office were unable to get a reply of any sort from the responsible authorities in Abyssinia.

Thousands of pounds have been left behind in Abyssinia by British firms and traders. No Britisher, trading honestly and legitimately, can hope to compete with the innate trickery and underhand methods of the Greek, Armenian, or Arab. He cannot descend to their levels. He may think he has learned all the tricks and can forestall them, but these gentry will always have a fresh trick up their sleeves with which to surprise the poor Britisher. I believe there is not a single European—genuine European—firm that has ever made a profit in the country, and I have heard it said that something like fifteen firms have made the attempt since the War. Shortly after the War a very influential British concern was formed, with plenty of capital and enormous

resources, to trade in Abyssinia. It was born with a flourish of trumpets; it bought up rivals and generally did itself and the staff well; but so far as actual trading went it was a complete failure. There is to-day a house standing in Addis Ababa which has a room furnished like the board-room of a powerful financial company in the City of London. The walls are panelled; the table, capable of seating twelve or more, is of solid mahogany; and the padded leather chairs match the table. This was the headquarters of the business, which it bought lock, stock, and barrel, for £35,000, and the premises were fitted out regardless of expense. The business lasted—I think I am generous—three years, and this particular branch of the business was sold back to the original seller for £5,000.

Marie Theresa dollars can be minted at Vienna. You buy the silver and have it minted and sent to Abyssinia. It sounds easy, but the company lost heavily over the various deals in silver, and this was the eventual cause of their downfall.

Finally, I don't know what it is, but the climate and conditions of the country seem to have a bad effect on the foreign element, especially those known as the Levantine. The British, I found, tried their best to fight against this, but the Levantine readily absorbed the ways and excelled in the crafty methods of business. There is a saying: "Turn over a stone in Abyssinia and you will find a Greek under it."

Abyssinia was at one time the last refuge of the adventurer; he could enter the country without a visa to his passport. Since it has been necessary to obtain a visa immigration of this kind has come to a stop, but the "old timer" is still there, and cannot be got rid of unless he oversteps the law. So long as he is there business cannot be clean or profitable to the legitimate trader.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THERE are no industries of any size in Abyssinia, although efforts in a small way have been made, but capital is required for the development of those started.

There are two very up-to-date flour mills at Addis Ababa, managed by an Indian firm, and these are capable of expansion, as there are ready markets for their output in the neighbouring countries. There is another mill at Dire Dawa, owned by a Frenchman.

A brewery and ice factory have recently been established at Addis Ababa, but its fortunes have been varied. It started under German auspices, with a German as chief brewer. The beer, however, was not a success—it was too “frothy,” and a drink of it was quite unsatisfactory. This, however, was soon remedied, but the unfavourable first impressions were difficult to remove; there were financial difficulties, I understand, and the concern has changed hands, passing into French possession. There should be a ready market, at lower prices than the imported beers, for a beer that is really thirst-quenching and palatable. Of course this European type of beer will never find its clientele amongst the Abyssinians themselves, as they are able to make their own beer, *talla*, at ridiculously low prices. *Talla* can be obtained at four horns to a pesa in Addis Ababa, and I understand six horns to a pesa is the usual price in the interior. It is quite a usual sight to see a woman struggling along under a huge earthenware jar, containing *talla*, the mouth of the jar being covered by eucalyptus leaves to keep out the dust, and she will stop anywhere and sell a pesa’s worth of *talla* to anyone. A perambulating bar in fact!

Imported beers are expensive, a dollar a bottle, and beer is therefore the most expensive drink one can offer. All the well-known Continental brands, and one or two English, are obtainable quite freely.

All the well-known whiskies, brandies in an infinite variety, every kind of liqueur, are in great demand and are much cheaper than at home. Whisky costs about six shillings and sixpence a bottle, and brandy is about the same price for the reputable brands. The Abyssinian, as a nation, has not yet cultivated the taste for alcohol, but the rich races and others who have tasted it can take it in large quantities, apparently without any affect; perhaps their local drinks, *tej* and *talla*, make them impervious.

I accompanied my husband once to an hotel when he was showing some slight hospitality to an Abyssinian of standing. Whisky-and-sodas were ordered, and in accordance with the custom of the country the bottle of whisky was produced. My husband took his usual "peg," but the Abyssinian nearly filled his glass with neat whisky. After the drinks were finished my husband's companion turned and asked why England did not produce something stronger than whisky, something that really caught your throat, and made you cough and splutter. Fortunately these cheap "firewaters" have not reached Abyssinia yet—at least, so I am told.

We were surprised, when we were new to the country, on being asked on the occasion of some feast if we with other Europeans would not use our car, or in fact go out at all that day. The feast was an important one and fittingly celebrated by the Abyssinians, and, as there were bound to be a lot of drunks on the road, the authorities were very thoughtful and requested the European community not to do anything that might lead to trouble.

There were one or two pleasant spots within nice

riding distance of Addis Ababa where we could ride out and sit down amidst really charming surroundings and have a drink and a meal of some sort if we wished. The Frenchman who catered for us in one direction was making his place into a sort of resort where there was boating, on an artificial lake, and bathing to be had. His huge rose garden was a sight to behold—it never seemed to be out of bloom. There were little rustic shelters on the side of the hill overlooking the gardens and lake, where drinks, etc., were served. The place could be reached by car, in the dry season, if you had no respect for your car, and on Sunday mornings the whole of the foreign element seemed to be wending its way there. The other place, on the road to Addis Alem, was quite as nice, but, being run by a German, had quite a different atmosphere. All sorts of German delicacies were to be had, and it was becoming quite an institution to run out in a car to the "Broken Bridge" for a supper of pork, or sausages and mash, with beer served in the typical German fashion. These two enterprising spirits deserve well.

As can be imagined, when it gets dark, somewhere about seven in the summer and six in the winter, there is very little to do outside the club and one's own home. Dinner parties are frequent, but the same faces are met again and again, and, apart from the pleasure of wearing a new dress or seeing new dresses, there was little to recommend them. Dancing was half-hearted, owing to altitude, and there were not enough people as a rule to get bridge going really strong. We found it quite fatiguing if we were late going to bed more than twice a week.

The longest evening I had in Addis Ababa was in our own home. During the rains I had given a dinner and there was only one other lady present. After dinner the men played bridge, and at about midnight, when there was a general move to say good night and the last drinks

were being served, it began to rain—and it rained in earnest. The compound was a swirling, surging torrent, and we could see, with our torch, the water running well over the foot-boards of the cars. It was impossible to drive a car in that deluge, and the men sat around waiting for the storm to ease up a little. After an hour there seemed to be no hope, so the men sat down and played “whisky” poker, whilst we two poor women watched. The rain did not lessen until after five a.m., so, as the servants were moving about, we had coffee prepared for our guests. Bed was out of the question, and we went straight to our baths and carried on with the usual day’s work. That night will live in our memories.

Although it is not essential to have iced drinks in Addis Ababa it is very nice to have a really iced beer in the middle of the day, or a really cold soda with whisky in the evening. It was not possible, however, until quite recently to get ice regularly in Addis Ababa—in fact not until the new brewery started an ice factory, and it should do well, as the demand was growing. There is no regular electric supply, and of course no gas, so electric or gas-operated refrigerators were out of the question and refrigerators worked by paraffin, as now obtainable, were not on the market then. It was only when we had hail that we were able to get an iced pudding. The servants would collect the hail in a bucket, and cook was called upon hastily to make a suitable pudding and it was put into the bucket of hail. It worked admirably. Although we were at a height of over 8,000 feet, the temperature rarely fell to freezing point. I can remember only one occasion, round about Christmas, when the water standing outside in a bucket had a thin coating of ice. The servants were excited, they had never seen ice before, and the bucket was brought triumphantly to me to see the phenomenon—“the glass that melted in the sun.”

Although tobacco is grown in Djimma, and one or two

other provinces, smoking is not common amongst the Abyssinians.

I see that I started this chapter with industries in Abyssinia but have strayed somewhat, so must revert.

Quite a good leather industry is growing in Addis Ababa, and shoemakers, cobblers and other workers in leather are springing up everywhere. Hides and skins are tanned into leather locally and the native is taking eagerly to a sort of shoe—half-sandal, half-shoe—and there is a brisk demand for these. It is quite an innovation as the native didn't usually wear shoes. Shoes, wallets, bags and even suit-cases are made locally. There is a German who covered a syce's saddle completely for us, and a very good job he made of it too. Most of the ornate head-gear, bridles, reins, etc., for the mules are local products. The work, however, is crude, very unfinished, and is generally left a nasty red colour. Leathers are dyed any colour, and various coloured skins can be seen drying, hung up in primitive sheds in a good many parts of the town, mostly on the outskirts. I had a green evening frock and wanted a pair of green slippers to match it, so tried one of the local shoemakers, who matched the colour perfectly, but the shoes themselves were too heavy for the purpose I wanted them. They made admirable walking-shoes.

Apropos of evening frocks and dresses generally, ladies were very lucky towards the end of my stay in Addis Ababa. A French woman, who had been left a widow in straightened circumstances, started a shop in a small way, and she did very well indeed. Before her marriage she had been an assistant in a very fashionable shop in Paris, and her employers supplied her with various articles, on terms that were enabling her to build up quite a decent business. We were able to get jumper frocks, afternoon and evening frocks, "undies," stockings, toilet and face powders, in fact, everything we could

possibly want, and, although they were expensive, the quality was there and the fashion up to the minute. In fact, when I came home on one occasion I was wearing a frock the fashion of which did not come to London until two or three months after.

There is a very big demand for soap of the cheapest quality, generally the Marseilles type, and an enterprising Greek tried to meet the demand by local manufacture. His example has been copied, and there were nearly a dozen small soap factories catering for the local market. We were shown over one very up-to-date factory which, although small, had its machinery worked by water. The owner had studied the manufacture of soap very closely and intended to improve the quality. He was very enterprising, and was colouring the soap in bright attractive colours so as to catch the eye of the native, and using some strong perfume. I was presented with a few samples, but after one trial I gave them over to the servants. They were highly delighted.

There was also an evil-smelling oil factory making vegetable oils. We saw this factory grow from a small shed to quite a big affair, so the business must have been doing quite well. I never experimented with the cooking oil, but some friends who tried it spoke very highly of it. I always bought an imported French vegetable oil for the cook, as I found that the smell of cooking from this did not pervade the house as those the cook bought in the *magalla* (bazaar) did. Later this oil factory tried its hand at making an oil for motor-cars and machinery, and retailed it to the small shops, who mixed it with well-known lubricating oils, to their immediate profit and the detriment of the machinery. It was not safe to buy any oils except direct from the agents.

There is a very big demand for ordinary paraffin oil, as is only natural in a country where there is no other form of illumination than oil lamps, and the poor little

donkeys can be seen going back to the interior each laden with four four-gallon tins of oil. It is wonderful to what uses these *korkoras* (tins) can be put to in a country like Abyssinia. They make very useful ovens. Candles, too, are largely used, and these are being made in Addis Ababa in a primitive way from tallow and fat. I suppose they serve their purpose, but imagine the smell from them !

There are also one or two brick kilns outside Addis Ababa, but the bricks that were being turned out were not a success, as they were too friable. The newer and better type houses were being built of stone that was quarried on the Shola plain, near Addis Ababa, and we often drove out on a Saturday afternoon to the quarries, taking tea with us. The stone is most suitable for house-building, but quite unsuitable for "road-metal." The authorities tried it, but found it was too soft and crumbled easily under wheeled traffic, and in the rains became undistinguishable from the ordinary soil.

As a change to our ordinary rides round about Addis Ababa we occasionally sent the ponies out overnight to some spot, some miles out, on one of the few roads leading out of the capital. The grooms with the ponies would spend the night in some village *tukhul*, and we would motor out early next morning, meet the ponies, and thus get a ride over fresh country. The ponies would be brought in next day. The quarries, where the building stone was being obtained, was a favourite starting-off place for us.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AFTER being "cooped-up" for three months during the rains we usually took the very first opportunity of a fine Sunday to get a ride outside Addis Ababa, and one year we sent the ponies out along the road to Addis Alem rather farther than usual. The country was its best, the Mascal flower had not quite finished, and the grass gave us some really good gallops. The ponies enjoyed these stretches as much as we did. After lunch we picked up the car, and on our way back to Addis Ababa had a punctured tyre.

It may be just as well to say here that Mascal time in Addis Ababa used to be the most dangerous and critical time of the year, and that if any trouble, in the way of revolution, etc., was brewing it generally broke out at this time, so everyone took precautions. The last time we were warned to take refuge in the British Legation, in the event of trouble, had been at this time of the year. We did not for a moment think, however, that the Abyssinians themselves prepared to meet trouble. We never went outside the limits of the town without my husband taking the usual precaution of carrying a small automatic pistol. We "jacked" the car up so as to get the wheel off the road, and our driver, an Abyssinian, was bending down, when out of the front of his trousers, which were innocent of buttons, fell a fully loaded revolver. I could not help laughing, who but an Abyssinian would ever dream of carrying a revolver *there*?—but my good man was apprehensive. A revolver, in the usual way, was quite a lot of money to an Abyssinian, and could have been got only by stealing, and what was the reason

for Waldo Mariam carrying one and at this time of the year. He demanded an explanation, and the chauffeur said he had bought it, and carried it for safety's sake, as there had been lots of talk about trouble at Mascal, and he knew the *gaeta* never carried any weapon!

Quite an industry is growing round Addis Alem, where there are large virgin forests, and the timber is being cut down, but strictly under permits this time. There are two kinds of wood obtainable which are in usual demand, a hard yellow one, which is suitable for furniture, and a red one which, although it can be used for furniture, window frames, doors, etc., is very brittle and easily chips off. All the timber work for the new houses springing up round Addis Ababa is being supplied from the Addis Alem forests. Every bit of our furniture was made from the yellow wood, and so were all the pews, lectern, and altar of our little English church. When our furniture had been in use for some months and had been polished daily with Mansion polish it became quite attractive and took on quite a pleasing patina.

At one of our formal dinners I had the Minister of a Great Nation sitting on my right, and, as he had recently completely furnished his legation with imported furniture, he was declaiming on the fact that no decent furniture could be obtained locally, and looking round our dining-room he asked me outright if I would put up with locally-made furniture. I could not help smiling whilst I replied that every piece in our house had been made locally. He took a lot of convincing. The only trouble with the local wood was that it was never thoroughly dried when it was made up into furniture, with the consequence that doors, drawers, etc., were shrinking and expanding during the dry and wet seasons and the furniture was always creaking loudly, especially at night.

Our wooden floors were quite dark in colour, and our Afghan and Baluchistan rugs showed up very well on

them. I had added to them by buying some Arab rugs from an Arab who did business with my husband. As a side line the Arab imported rugs direct from Arabia, and asked if we would go round and see some of his best ones, of which he was very proud. When we did go he condescended to sell us some, but the one I really wanted was the one he was sitting on. Of course that was not for sale. I did not want any unless I could have that identical one, and there was a sharp tussle in obstinacy. I won, and got a treasure. I know little or nothing of Oriental rugs, but the design and colouring of the one I had set my heart on was pleasing to my eyes. I once saw an Arab, the sheikh of his clan, go down on his hands and knees to examine the carpet in our dining-room. He was in his best silken ceremonial robes, and it was with difficulty that I refrained from smiling.

At certain seasons we were troubled with hordes of ants coming into the house, great big red soldier ants, and the servants were in the habit of turning out the room infested and strewing eucalyptus leaves all round the skirting. The smell was effective in keeping them out of sight, but did not actually get rid of them, and for this purpose we used to cover the floors periodically with flake naphthaline. For days after the whole house reeked of naphthaline and the floors were as slippery as glass.

We were very proud of our little English church in Addis Ababa, and all the women members, about four in number, of the congregation helped in furnishing, making altar cloths, window curtains, and supplying flowers every Sunday. The church consisted of one room in a bungalow, and the Padre occupied the rest of the house for his living quarters. It was a great pity that the services were not more regularly attended by the residents of Addis Ababa.

I wonder how many people at home could say who Laleith was? A friend of ours had been invited to an

official dinner, and he had ascertained that he would be sitting next to a Ras who was of a very religious turn of mind and whose conversation was always on religion. Our friend wanted a religious subject of conversation with which he could "floor" the Ras, and Laleith was suggested to him, and our ponderous Webster was requisitioned to give us all the information. Laleith, it appears, was the unofficial wife of Adam, and to the Abyssinians is the Goddess of Night or Evil, and her name is perpetuated in the Abyssinian word for night. Happily our friend found no occasion for introducing his recently acquired information.

There was another piece of information I acquired in Abyssinia, from an Abyssinian. When man was being created colour was rather a problem, so experiments were carried out by putting him into an oven. The first was a negro—he was black and overcooked; the second was a white man—he was undercooked; the third, and final, experiment produced the perfect colour, that of a pure Abyssinian, a delicate brown.

The coffee that is produced in Abyssinia is practically all of wild origin, as there are very few plantations in the strict sense of the word. The Queen of Sheba, after her visit to King Solomon, returned to Arabia via Abyssinia and took with her coffee beans from Abyssinia, so that Abyssinia may be said to be the original home of coffee. In the province of Kaffa, in the south-west of Abyssinia there is a coffee jungle with the coffee beans lying ankle deep on the ground, as it is not worth the cost and trouble of transport to the capital for sale there. A party of travellers, prospecting for gold, heard of this forest, and one of them returned to America with fabulous tales of the coffee, and induced a very well-known food firm to finance an expedition to handle it; it could be exported, so they said, for about 6d. a pound. The expedition did things in grand style in Addis Ababa, and the caravan

was equipped in the most luxurious manner. Money was no object, apparently, and prices went sky high for mules, donkeys, and ponies. Even special pack-saddles of American pattern had been brought out for the mules, and the animals were to be fed only to the sound of a trumpet. Weeks went by in getting the men and animals used to the new saddlery and the mules accustomed to feeding by trumpet. There was nearly a riot—the mule-teers threatened to leave, the mules would not eat—so in the end the good old Abyssinian ways, of a thousand years, were retained and the expedition finally left the capital. They were never heard of again; no, they were not all massacred, but no marvellous coffee at unheard-of prices was produced, and the whole expedition fizzled out.

It is surprising how easily some people can persuade level-headed persons to believe in the discovery in Abyssinia of some wonderful mines, containing hoards of wealth supposed to have belonged to King Solomon, and to sink their money in these “get-rich” schemes. The fabled mines of the Queen of Sheba, with their vast deposits of rubies and other precious gems, are the usual bait, but I do not seem to remember seeing any of these gems in the hands of those who were supposed to discover the mines, nor have I heard of any great wealth being extracted by the expeditions. True, gold and platinum are to be found, but they must be recovered in the usual mining fashion.

There are some very large coffee plantations in the Arussi country under foreign management, and the coffee produced is of a very high quality, but it is never likely to be a profitable investment to the present shareholders. The plantations cover an immense acreage, the most modern machinery has been installed, and modern roads made, but the estate is too far away from rail-head. Further, the estate is divided into two separate sections,

many miles apart. The small privately owned and managed compact estate of, say, 400 acres is a much more likely proposition, and there were several of these estates being opened up when we left the country.

Cotton has also been experimentally grown, but not on a commercial scale so far. There was a German estate near Lake Matahara, and the small quantity of cotton produced there was of an excellent type. Abyssinia can definitely be made into a cotton-producing country, as cotton is already grown there, and the best quality hand-woven *chammas*, light, warm, and of beautiful texture, are made from the local-grown cotton. In the season natives may be seen in their *tukhuls* spinning these on primitive machines, operated by hand and foot. The Emperor is evidently of the same opinion, and when his energies are not required in other directions he will one day set up a cotton factory in Addis Ababa. The machinery has been waiting there since 1925! When Ras Taffari, as he was then, visited England in 1924, he bought the complete machinery for a ginning factory and had it sent out to Addis Ababa. One of the firm's engineers was selected to go out to superintend the erection of the machinery and to start it working. The engineer duly arrived, and, after some time, the foundations for the new factory were started upon, but it was discovered that the land did not belong to the Emperor and the rightful owner objected to a factory being built on his land, and would not sell it. Work was therefore stopped. The engineer completed his year's contract and returned home, and the machinery is still in the original cases. Some parts were utilized for generating electricity for the coronation celebrations in 1930.

There was much talk of a concession having been granted to a Japanese concern for the growing of cotton, but the whole affair seems to be "wropt in mystery," and nobody quite knew where it was intended to grow the

cotton. At any rate it was an accepted fact that Japan was interested in the proposition, and would start operations some day, importing their own labour and doing things on a grand scale. Japanese goods are being imported into the country in increasing volume. A Japanese firm had opened an office there, and prices were being so severely cut that goods from other countries, especially Lancashire, were almost unsaleable.

After the coronation the Abyssinian Foreign Minister paid a visit to Japan to thank them for sending a representative to the Emperor's coronation. When the Foreign Minister returned to Abyssinia he was accompanied by a Japanese trade delegation who brought with them a very large consignment of goods of every description, which, under the protection of the Abyssinian Foreign Minister, were admitted into the country duty free. These goods were being sold at ridiculously low prices, especially the cotton goods. Now was the Indian *bunniahs'* chance. They bought up the whole stock of cotton goods brought in by the Japanese delegation. Prices were maintained at the old level, and the *bunniahs* reaped a handsome profit by their astuteness. For some months after no further Japanese goods were brought into the country, but when they did arrive duty had to be paid. There was considerable talk, too, of a Japanese Minister being appointed, and discreet inquiries were being made for suitable houses for the legation.

The experiments made by the Germans for cotton growing were round Lake Matahara—the first station from Harwash going up to Addis Ababa. Just before the lake is reached the railway line cuts through an immense bed of lava. I think it must stretch for fifteen miles, and it needs very little imagination to see where all this lava came from. There is an outstanding hill of unusual shape easily seen from the train, and this is obviously the old volcano, but dead for many hundreds of years. The

lava bed stops suddenly as if the flow had been arrested by some barrier, and there is not a living thing to be seen, plant or animal. Nobody has any information as to when the last eruption took place, and geologists would find this a happy hunting ground. The lake itself is affected—the water is quite undrinkable, except for one small portion where a fresh-water spring flows into it.

The whole plateau of Abyssinia seems to have been part of some huge volcanic ridge in the dim and distant past. There are theories that at one time the Red Sea flowed through Abyssinia, and evidence in support of this is given by the range of Lakes Zwai, Margherita, Rudolph and others, all running in the same direction south-west, and by the fact that some of these lakes are salt while others contain fresh water. Just outside Addis Ababa there is Mount Zekwala, of distinctly volcanic appearance, with a lake right on top. There is also a monastery on this mountain, and it is quite a short and pleasant camping expedition from Addis Ababa to the lake and monastery. I have been told, too, that the sub-soil of the whole plateau does not extend more than fifteen to twenty feet deep in any part, so that it is only in recent years, in geological terms, that the volcanoes have ceased to be active.

There are no "home industries" in the country, beyond basket weaving and making. These are made from a special kind of grass, which grows freely in the country, and these strips are dyed blue, green, brown, red and yellow from dyes prepared locally and which are quite "fast." Serviceable trays and baskets, various shaped goblets and beakers, are made by the women, and are very attractive in their bright colours. We found quite a lot of uses for these trays for bread, baskets to hold my sewing, in addition to using them as mere ornaments on the walls. The Harrar work is the best, with a silver thread woven into the design, and the Emperor

and Empress encourage the industry in Harrar, taking all that can be produced for their own use. I was very lucky in being able to obtain one of these trays.

The Abyssinian is no craftsman, in the real sense of the word. It is painful to see him wield a hammer, although he is an expert with the chopper or an axe. The carpenters are nearly all Indians, and the stonemasons and bricklayers Arabs. The hand-saw is used in a peculiar manner, the saw being reversed, that is, the teeth are away from the user and the saw is pushed away instead of being drawn towards him. Silver dollars are melted down and made into various ornaments of crude workmanship and inferior designs, generally of the Lion of Judah. The high officials of the church carry wands, or staves, which are covered with silver, beaten and worked into various designs. The priests carry a sort of bell in the shape of a wide two-pronged fork, with discs suspended between the forks. The framework may be of silver, but the discs are made out of pieces cut out of kerosene tins! These bells are used for granding blessings, and make quite a pleasant tinkling sound when used properly.

I consider their idea of art pretty low in standard, and did not care at all for their pictures, which struck me as bad in drawing and garish in colour and altogether unfinished. Most of the subjects are religious or of some heroic deed or of hunting scenes, the subject generally killing his lion or elephant at a yard's range.

Their drinking utensils, made from the horns of buffaloes, are decorated with carved designs and make very effective vases for flowers.

I used to stand for long stretches at a time watching the Abyssinians making the walls for their *tukhuls*. First a large hole is dug, and the loose earth is turned over and over again, getting rid of the stones, boulders etc. Then the loose earth is watered until a "slush" is made, the

men standing in it trampling it down and turning it over with their feet. It is then allowed to stand for three or four days, or even more, when it is watered again freely, and finely chopped straw thrown in and the trampling and kneading continued.

When the mud has got to a certain consistency it is applied to the walls, which have hitherto consisted of split eucalyptus tied together with rough home-made string. The mud is thrown apparently haphazard at the wall and then smoothed down with the palm of the hand, if a piece of wood is not available. How I longed to try my hand at throwing the mud! No one bothers to fill in the hole from which the earth has been taken, the hole being left and used as a refuse dump, and later grass grows over it and conceals it—one learns to look for these hollows when approaching a *tukhul* or village.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IN spite of the fertile soil of the country—two crops at least can be raised every year—large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats, and potential wealth in the shape of gold and platinum and other minerals, the Abyssinian native is a poor man, and a dollar to him is a large sum of money. His standard of living would be considered by most as verging on the borderline of poverty, but he has not known any other standard and is content, and apparently happy. His customs and manners may be strange and bizarre. He clings to the traditions of his fathers—these go back no further—and what was good enough for his fathers is good enough for him. His patch of ground, one or two head of cattle, a few sheep and goats, a donkey, a few fowl, produce all he needs and he does not grumble at his lot.

His dwelling-place is a hut made out of split eucalyptus, plastered with mud, the roof thatched with straw, with overhanging eaves to protect the walls from the rain. The walls are always circular—I suppose this is easier to build than corners. Doors are rare—a fence made out of thornbush is drawn across the opening and keeps out wild animals and keeps the domestic animals in. Disused kerosene oil tins, beaten out flat, are conspicuous in filling up holes in the roof and the walls. The floor is of mud, banked up to make a fireplace in one corner, and there is very little furniture. There may be a bed or a couch made out of rawhide thongs, but usually there are only skins thrown on the floor to serve as beds.

In some huts chairs may be seen, hewn out of single

blocks of wood, and very comfortable they are too. We had one of these stools—the seat was the top of a stump whilst the wood had been hewn out to make the legs. A wonderful stool, with a really ornate top which formed a box, was presented to me by my head-boy as a peace offering when he had been severely strafed for some offence. The whole thing had been cut out of a solid block of wood and came from Jimma. I used the box for keeping my sewing, knitting, etc., in.

All cooking is done inside the hut, and the wood smoke has no outlet except through the roof. On a bright day, with the sun blinding in its intensity outside, it takes some minutes for the eyes to get accustomed to the gloom, and penetrate the choking smoke which makes the eyes smart. The atmosphere is redolent of human and animal bodies, mingled with the smell of rancid butter and burning cow-dung, and one is glad to get outside again. At night all the live animals, donkey, goats, and fowls are brought in, not only for safety, but to provide warmth for the humans, who in the worst part of the hut curl themselves up on a hide or a skin on the floor, and cover themselves with their rags of clothes, or, if they are well off, with a cheap blanket.

Poor as he may be, he will extend hospitality—open-handed hospitality is characteristic of the country. He promptly offers you the only stool in the hut. Can he get the matey some milk or even coffee, and would she like some *injera*, and honey? Can he do anything for the horses? (*Injera* is made from barley, ground by hand, and made into a batter, some sort of herb being used to leaven it—it is then poured into a girdle and slowly cooked.) Not to give offence, I would take a sip of milk from a horn—and wonder what disease I might be picking up—and would accept a small piece of bread, but under no circumstances would I touch the honey. I did once, and writhed all night in agony. The bees are wild,

feeding on all sorts of flowers and plants, and their honey is too strong for the European "tummy"—I know it was for mine.

From a distance a native village, with the huts close together and the thatch, is picturesque enough, lying, as it generally does, in a hollow in the hillside, with a protecting belt of trees. Closer contact, however, dispels the illusion.

A head-man's hut is generally larger and more pretentious inside, with, perhaps, a bed or a couch, a rush mat, and one or two skins strewn over the floor. A chief's homestead, however, rises far superior, and quite dominates the village. It, too, is built of mud and thatch, with three enclosures. The first one is more or less a yard for cattle and stores; the inner enclosures for servants and slaves; while the great man himself, with his womenfolk, wives, mistresses and children, occupies the innermost.

If you are of any importance, and the chief has been advised of your arrival, he will meet you in person at the outer gate, with his followers crowding in the background, all carrying weapons of some kind, swords dangling to their heels, cruel-looking spears, rifles ranging from antiquities to more modern manufacture. All, however, have cartridge belts, and it is a matter of little importance that the cartridges do not fit the rifles. There is much bowing and *tenasteling* and you are escorted in state to the living-house. It is generally the usual *tukhul* of the country with a better mud floor, more skins, and a certain number of chairs of the bentwood variety, and couches.

It is with great pride that you will be shown round the various enclosures and compounds and the store-room and kitchen. The store-room is crowded with sheepskins filled with barley, there may be some modern gunny bags—and huge baskets standing five feet or more contain more grain. The barley is used for *injera* and

talla, and great earthenware jars stand in one corner containing *talla* and perhaps *tej*. The ubiquitous kerosene tin is here too—not only for storing purposes but also for measuring out the issues of barley.

As a woman I had, of course, to be shown the kitchen and to express my surprise and pleasure. It is generally a separate hut, with a mud floor on which there are two or three small fires with earthen pots standing at one side and slowly simmering. Finely chopped meat, red pepper, lentils of which I knew not the name, pans of milk, butter and gravy were all in readiness for our meal. I was hungry, or thought I was, until I saw and smelled all the pepper that was going to be put into the curry (*berberi*) and gravy. Women and children outside were grinding and pounding the ingredients.

I was tired and wanted a wash—we had had a long ride that morning—but our camp kit was not yet in sight. Oh, for a cup of tea! At long last the meal was served. The food was served on long low tables; there were no chairs and we had to squat, cross-legged on the floor. I was put between my host and hostess whilst my husband sat opposite. There were, of course, no knives or forks or spoons, and no plates; instead round pieces of *injera* were put in front of me, and trays of *berberi* and curry and other wonderful dishes stood arrayed. I had to help myself to some curry and put it in the middle of my piece of *injera*, break off a piece and dip it into the curry and gravy and, as gracefully as I could, convey it to my mouth. It is quite an art and I never became an expert at it. Host and hostess pressed me in turn to try a certain dish, and would now and again take a specially selected morsel and hold it to my mouth. My eyes were watering and I looked across to my good man for help, but he, the beast, was making a good meal and could not make out why I was protesting.

The water was unsafe, so, after being pressed to *tej* or

talla, I compromised on milk—the others drank *tej* or *talla*. Conversation was disjointed—my words of Amharic did not enable me to carry on a fluent conversation—but we got to the end of that meal without disgracing ourselves. I had noticed a curtain being drawn over the entrance as we entered, and learned afterwards that it was to keep out the evil eye. The people are very superstitious and dread this evil eye, newly born children being kept in gloom for some weeks on this score.

When we had finished I found, to my joy, that our camp kit had arrived and the tent was being put up. As soon as the camp-beds were ready I crawled in, took off my coat and riding-boots, and lay down to sleep. Oondie had tea ready for us when we woke, and the men from the village had brought us some water, and there was a chicken and milk from the chief for our dinner. It was a lovely evening, and we went round the village on a tour of inspection whilst dinner was being got ready and the tents properly seen to. We saw our horses had been fed and were properly bedded down for the night. The syces were in high good humour—I guess there had been plenty of *talla* about. Later on the chief, with a few of his followers, called upon us at our tent. He was given a glass of whisky and offered cigarettes, and his attempts at smoking were ludicrous, but I dared not laugh. He had never smoked, but, out of courtesy, could not refuse and made brave efforts, the smoke getting in his eyes and making him cough. The milk had been boiled by Oondie, so I tried for the first time whisky and hot milk, and it found favour in my eyes.

Dinner was served by the aid of candles, and no sooner had it been removed than we laced down our tent and crawled into our blankets. The noise of the washing up, the voices of Oondie and the syces, and one or two villagers, gradually died away and a great stillness came down and I fell asleep.

The next morning, before it was hardly light, Oondie brought us tea and said he would bring us some hot water in a few minutes. I got into my riding-breeches and boots and ventured outside for my wash; I should think I had all the children from that village watch me perform my ablutions. Early as our start was, there was a messenger from the chief. Was there anything he could do for us or send us? We sent back our thanks for the hospitality we had received and rode off into the cool of the morning with *tenastelings* following us for quite a long way.

When "trekking" seriously, early starts are made, generally soon after daybreak, so as to get in as many miles as possible before the sun really gets hot. Camp is pitched about eleven or twelve o'clock, but this depends entirely on the distances between water-holes, and if these are any distance apart trekking must go on until the water is reached. Mules are far better on the trek than horses; they will drink anything, even your bath-water!

There is plenty of shooting to be had around Addis Ababa if you are keen and energetic. There are wild duck and snipe—the favourite places are kept secret in case they should be "shot over" by others—and there is always gazelle to be seen. I once had an old map of Abyssinia shown to me, giving the various places where different animals were to be found. I found hippopotamus in Lakes Zwai and Tsana, nyala in the Arussi country, with elephants, rhinoceros, leopards, lions, koodoo and buck scattered throughout the country, and every river teeming with crocodile. We did not go in for hunting, as we considered it beyond our means, but Abyssinia should be a hunter's paradise if money is no object and a hunting permit can be obtained. Herds have been greatly reduced in recent years, as every Ethiopian, especially in the low country, is a hunter, and



The proprietor of an Abyssinian "hotel" with
his son



Oondie, the perfect servant, in his sober moments



permits are now difficult to get, and are granted only to a favoured few. In spite of the indiscriminate killing Abyssinia still has a plentiful supply of game, and, given time, and a desire to explore the lowlands and face the heat, there is no reason why a good bag should not be obtained.

The lion's mane is still worn by the Rases and Chiefs of the Army as part of their full regalia; lions are still plentiful, and their skins are freely obtainable in Addis Ababa. A friend of ours, a resident, obtained a magnificent specimen, and his difficulty was to get it out of the country, as the export of these skins is prohibited. He could not take it in his luggage when going home, as it would be too bulky, and his luggage was bound to be examined and the skin discovered and confiscated, or a prohibitive duty levied. The only course was to put on a bold front and send it through the post! Accordingly, armed with various parcels, he attended the post office and, whilst handing over the other parcels for examination, entered into a genial conversation with the clerk, who after he had examined three or four parcels, containing no dutiable goods, accepted the remainder without any further examination.

The old theory that lions could not climb trees has been exploded in some wonderful photos, from Kenya, of lions in the act of climbing up trees and shown in *The Times* not long ago, so I suppose the old method of sitting up a tree, over a kill, will be abandoned in due course of time. I should hate to be chased up a tree by Master Leo. I once met a very shamefaced hunting-party of Europeans at a little wayside station; they had been out after lion, but had returned empty-handed. Two of them had been specially sent out by a national museum and were doing themselves extremely well. They had obtained the services of a reliable European who, on two different occasions, staged an easy shoot

for them over a kill. The lion duly made an appearance and carried off the goat each time, but the brave hunters were fast asleep, and did not get even a glimpse of the lion.

I understand the Abyssinian still goes after lion in broad daylight, tracking him to his lair, from where he is beaten out and then speared. In the low-lying country a man is not considered a full-grown man until he has killed his lion single-handed.

I often saw the spoor of leopards round Addis Ababa, and it always sent a cold shiver down my back when I came across these. There is a big demand for their skins, and I soon got to know the difference between the skin of an Abyssinian leopard and that of a Somali leopard. The latter was by a long way the better skin, and I often thought of having a coat made of them, but was afraid it would be too conspicuous. I did, however, have the skin of a black, perfectly black, leopard, and waited in vain to get another to match it, so that I could have a coat. These black leopards are uncommon, but not a distinct species, as they are to be found in the litters of the ordinary spotted leopard. My black leopard-skin finally degenerated into a heart-rug, but the long tail was always getting in the way and became a perfect nuisance.

The nyala is to be found only above the ten-thousand-foot level, and I understand that the best head in recent years, if not the absolute record, was obtained by the Duke of Gloucester when he came out for the coronation of the Emperor in 1930.

The search for ivory has greatly decreased the herds of elephants. The natives have a very cruel way of killing them. They attach a huge ball of clay to the end of a hunting-spear and suspend this from a tree so that when an elephant passes underneath it will be released and fall upon the elephant and penetrate slightly. The movement of the elephant, and the weight of the clay

ball, makes the spear penetrate still further, so that, unless the haft is broken, the spear gradually sinks in deeper and finally gives a fatal wound. Should the haft break, and the head remain, a festering wound develops and the elephant becomes maddened and will attack on the slightest provocation.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I WAS fortunate in being present at both Coronations of the present Emperor, when he was crowned King in 1928, and later in 1930 when he was crowned King of Kings, Emperor Haile Sellassie the First of Ethiopia.

I have no outstanding recollections of the 1928 Coronation, as it took place so early in the morning and gave me the impression of a sort of "register office marriage," carried out hastily and secretly—there were few spectators, no festive preparations, no gaily decorated streets, no triumphal arches, and, looking back, it was a very businesslike affair shorn of all attendant pomp and ceremony.

The Coronation of the Emperor, however, in 1930 was a very different affair. The Emperor ascended the throne in April, 1930, and at once decided that his Coronation as Emperor should be worthy of a descendant of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. The Great Powers and Nations were to be invited and send representatives, and lavish hospitality was to be extended. Ethiopia, under its new Emperor, was to take a worthy place in the world.

Rumour was busy during those months of preparation. Various dates for the Coronation were given, and proved to be incorrect; when the date, the 2nd of November, was finally fixed, no one would believe that it would be adhered to; even that there was a possibility of the Coronation not taking place at all. To quieten these rumours it was necessary to issue a proclamation that the Coronation most certainly would take place on the date published, and anybody heard saying otherwise would

be punished. There seemed to be a period when nothing was being done, and that the rule of *Isshi-naga* (yes, to-morrow) still held sway. Time was getting on, and if there was to be any sort of show preparations should be well in hand. The only signs were the reconditioning of the main roads.

Suddenly hectic and frantic preparations were made. High palisades of split eucalyptus were being erected to conceal the *tukhuls* and other native dwellings. Workmen started work on various gigantic triumphal arches in several parts of the town; an annexe to St. George's Cathedral was being built specially for the Coronation ceremony; at long last there were signs of the statue to Menelik being brought into position. Troops were being drilled by their Belgian officers; the cavalry were being specially trained to their escort duties; the young musicians were making day and night hideous with their attempts at the various national anthems. Every day had its own rumour—a member of the British Royal Family had accepted the invitation; Italy were going one better, they would be represented by their Crown Prince; a famous Marshal would represent France; America would send an Ambassador; Japan a Royal Prince; and so the list went on.

The ex-Kaiser's ceremonial coach had been purchased for the occasion, and a team of eight grey Austrian horses, to draw the coach, were already at Aden. Bunting and the national colours—green, red, and yellow—were becoming conspicuous. The town was being tidied up, beggars were prohibited, lepers were banished from the streets, caravans were not to be allowed to come into the town for a fortnight before the great event; gardens were being laid out, and an avenue of trees to the station was planted; electric standards were being put into position, and the town given a false appearance to the usual workaday conditions. As usual in Abyssinia, everything was

being left to the last minute, and final preparations were being feverishly completed to be in time for the due date. As a matter of fact, the triumphal arches were completed only the night before the Coronation.

Throughout these days of brilliant sunshine thousands of domestic slaves and *negadies* were pressed into service as manual labourers, and workmen were being commandeered and paid fabulous wages. Men, camels, donkeys and mules were to be seen staggering beneath huge blocks of stone and other building materials. Steam rollers on every main road were working at all hours of the day and night. Trainloads of champagnes and other wines and foodstuffs were arriving daily. Chiefs with their followers were thronging the streets, and it was difficult to recognize the old town in this transformation and unusual activity.

Houses were being hastily erected to house the various important guests; many residents were asked if they would rent their houses furnished at exorbitant figures; household servants were being enticed away to take temporary service; every public motor-car was engaged in advance. Some of the houses that were being erected were left in an unfinished state, owing to various causes. A pretentious building, to house many of the Missions, in the grounds of what was then the Foreign Office never got beyond the foundations, as the ground was found to be waterlogged; for many months after the Coronation the cement blocks, earthenware pipes, etc., were to be seen lying about in the grounds. The Emperor was to be seen daily, in the early hours, making a tour of inspection and seeing personally to all details.

The army and police now appeared in new uniforms (not replaced for many months and allowed to go into tatters before being replaced); the troops were being properly equipped with saddlery and lances of uniform

pattern; and everything was set for the most wonderful day in the life of the Emperor.

Business was at a standstill, and my husband was appointed special correspondent to London newspapers and a Press agency. Our days were full in consequence, visiting the preparations, taking photos, writing descriptive articles, and making arrangements for the prompt dispatch of cables. Those who knew the old order of things were sorry to see the picturesqueness, lying behind the primitive scenes, disappear under the garishness of the new, crude and tawdry decorations. Addis Ababa no longer presented her true appearance, and visitors obtained quite a wrong impression.

A world-famous company sent out their own engineers to teach the Abyssinians how to build roads capable of taking heavy traffic. When they had finished their demonstration they departed, and left the local people to get on with it. They made a start with the Station Road. Within a month, and only just in time for the Coronation, it had to be done again. None of the roads made by the local authorities came up to the road made by the imported engineers.

There was difficulty in obtaining sufficient electric power to light the whole town. The Palace was outlined completely by electric bulbs, and the cases containing the cotton machinery were opened up and the engines brought into use. The necessary engines for the extra power required had been ordered from Europe, but could not be made use of. They arrived too late to be put into position, and, further, a lot of the parts were broken and could not be replaced.

Lloyd's agent was requested to make a survey of the breakage for insurance purposes; he did so and presented his survey report and was duly paid his fee. A year or two later he happened to mention a survey he had made for the Government, long before the Coronation, on

certain material imported for the bathing establishment at Filwaha, and asked if the matter had been settled satisfactorily. To his surprise he was told that nothing had been done further in the matter, and that his report was still in the files of the department concerned. The authorities had made no claim, based upon the report, and were under the impression that the loss would be made good without any application. Exactly the same thing happened over the electric light engines for the Coronation. The loss was taken as the "will of Allah."

Although so many electric-light standards had been erected, very few of them were lighted—there was not sufficient power—and long after the Coronation these standards were still in position, derelict, and threatening to fall at any moment, until they were finally removed and eventually sold for firewood. There is a curious regulation in Addis Ababa with regard to electric power, cables conveying electric current must not be taken across the road, either above or below ground! I wonder if this regulation will still be enforced *when* electric power is freely available?

There is no main water supply in Addis Ababa, although a site for a reservoir was surveyed some years ago, at considerable expense, and would have proved ideal for the town. No further steps were taken for its development, but a few isolated taps are now to be seen in a few parts of the town, the water being brought down from one of the Entoto hills. The pipes leading to the Palace are always leaking and flooding the roads (!) and women come from the near-by *tukhuls* and fill their earthenware jars. It would be difficult, I suppose, to keep the water from being wasted, if there were a main supply, or for any revenue to be collected from the regular users. The taps that have been installed are rarely turned off, and the water is allowed to run to waste. This is typical of the country. Expensive innovations

are introduced, but no care is taken of them, and no provision made for their upkeep, and in a very short time the article, whether it be a house, garden or steam-roller, is more or less abandoned and derelict.

Expensive furnishings, household equipment, beds and bedding, ornaments, etc., for the use of the Coronation visitors had been ordered from one of the leading West End stores. Everything was of the finest quality, and after the visitors had departed a "shop" was set up by the Government for the disposal of these surpluses. At first there was a rush to purchase these goods, which were being sold at ridiculous prices; for instance, silver candelabra were sold in sets of two, or more as the buyer desired, at the actual cost price of one! We were not particularly interested, however, at the time, as we were coming home, but we visited the shop out of mere curiosity, and were astounded at the low prices.

On my return, some months later, I required some things, so went along to the "shop"—most of the goods were still there but had been badly looked after, and had consequently depreciated tremendously. The quilts, cushions, rugs, were full of moths, the refrigerators and ice-chests were useless, and, in short, although there were a lot of articles still for sale there was hardly anything worth buying. Prices, too, had been considerably increased. On inquiry we learned that mistakes were made in fixing the original prices, and to recoup themselves the authorities had greatly enhanced the prices—in fact had made them prohibitive, so that little or nothing was being sold, and the value of the stock was fast depreciating.

I heard a fleet of over 200 motor-cars had arrived for the use of the visitors. I think this was a bit of an exaggeration, and would put the figure more correctly at 20. The Emperor, however, had quite a large fleet before the Coronation and all these were put into use.

The principal foreign visitors had their own national cars allotted to them: the Duke of Gloucester had a Rolls-Royce, the Italian Prince an Isotta-Fraschini, the French Marshal a Renault, and so on. I cannot remember, however, if a Ford were set aside for the American Envoy.

The Coronation Coach was now being frequently seen in the streets, drawn by six brown Austrian horses to get them accustomed to the weird sights and noises. Rumour had it at first that there were eight white horses, but only six brown put in an appearance, and beautiful creatures they were too. I wonder what their destiny will be in Abyssinia. A special coachman, a German, had also been imported for the occasion, and for the actual Coronation was turned out in a most resplendent costume—a black three-cornered hat, green velvet coat with tails and brass buttons, a red waistcoat, and yellow plush breeches (the national colours), and finished off with black court shoes with silver buckles.

He was not happy, however. One of the aeroplanes that flew to Abyssinia for the Coronation was a Fokker, piloted by the late Major Clarke, and with a German mechanic. The State coachman and this mechanic soon became close friends, and the mechanic reported to his employer, Major Clarke, that the coachman had been some time in the country but had not received a penny in pay, and would Major Clarke do something in the matter. Major Clarke was a frequent visitor at our house, and mentioned the matter to my husband, who saw one of the Court officials, and I believe the matter was soon put right.

Two planes, chartered by London newspapers, were flown over to take back photos of the Coronation. These planes flew up via Djibouti, and whilst refuelling there had picked up one of my husband's colleagues and flew him to Addis Ababa. My husband knew nothing of this and had been paying a formal call on the Emperor in

connection with hiring one of His Majesty's planes, and had arrayed himself in his "best clothes," morning coat, silk hat, etc., and I had completed the picture by pinning a carnation on his coat before he left.

When he returned home, as he was coming down our front steps into our garden, where I was, six figures, in khaki shorts and shirts, came suddenly round the corner of the house. They were the pilots, passengers, etc., from the two machines, and had been brought straight from the aerodrome to our place for lunch and a general clean-up, etc. As they caught sight of my husband one of the pilots exclaimed: "My God! Savoy Chapel, and I thought I was coming to Abyssinia, a wild country!" Their surprise could well be understood, as the general dress down in Djibouti was as far removed from the usual Addis Ababa dress as can be imagined.

They were made welcome, and whilst they were having drinks our cook was increasing the lunch originally intended only for two, to satisfy six more hungry souls. Lunch was only half an hour later than usual, was served up in proper style, and there was more than enough for everyone. Imagine a housewife at home called upon at half an hour's notice to provide a meal for six more!

Major Clarke, one of the pilots, made our house his headquarters during his stay, although he had a tent in the grounds of the Imperial Hotel. He was unfortunate in his race back to London with the photos for his papers. He got a sudden chill, owing to the contrast in the heat he had been flying through and the cool atmosphere of Addis Ababa for which he was not prepared, and developed a bad attack of malaria, and was still considerably "under the weather" when he had to fly back. He was not much later than his rivals, and one of his papers wrote the following of his gallant effort:

The indomitable grit of a fever-stricken British airman

brought the historic pictures of the Coronation which were published in the London newspapers on November the 7th. The hero of this flight was Major I. N. C. Clarke—a Melbourne man who undertook to take back the pictures by air in a Personal Flying Service machine. In the course of his flight of over 4,000 miles he crossed dangerous jungles and treacherous swamps, risking his life mile after mile, and eventually persisting to his goal against the terrible handicap of fever. He won through to Tunis by sheer pluck and stoic endurance, and the pictures were wired from Marseilles to London . . . and were a monument to a great endeavour.

At Tunis Major Clarke slowly recovered from the effects of his gruelling experience. He was killed shortly after in an air crash, and I am glad I still have his gift to me, a riding-whip with an ivory handle of Abyssinian manufacture, which he gave to me when he was in Addis Ababa.

Our house was very full and very busy during the two weeks preceding the Coronation. Many of the journalists and special correspondents came in when they had any spare time, and the boys of the "Paramount Pictures" were frequently in. We liked having these visitors, and I look back with pleasure upon some of the friends I made then. The Paramount boys had been left in the lurch and looked like being too late in getting their films back to Europe and America. Their rivals had made arrangements for the pictures to be taken by one of the planes, and in their dilemma they came to my husband, who had chartered a machine for the journey down to Djibouti. The other planes were flying all the way to London. The Paramount pictures were flown down to Djibouti, where arrangements were made to hand them over to the purser of the Messageries boat going home. At Suez the boat was met and the photos taken by a fast motor-car across to Alexandria, where a specially chartered plane was waiting to fly them across to Paris.

Here the films were developed and flown across to Southampton and put on the same boat that was taking the rival pictures across to America. Both sets of pictures were shown simultaneously in New York! It required some planning ahead, but we were so pleased that we had not been outdone.

Addis Ababa was now being filled to overcrowding with black, yellow, brown and white men from the ends of the earth. Not only were the special guests and visitors taking up all accommodation, but thousands of wild tribesmen were thronging the streets during these days, to stop and stare at the wonderful sights and impede the work going on. These followers were encamped on the hills, some twenty miles outside the town, which were ablaze at night with their camp-fires. Great nobles paraded through the streets, attended by their escorts, limited in number, but gorgeous for all that. Velvet cloaks, lions' manes, shields studded with gold and silver, were common sights. No chief, however, could bring into the town more than twenty followers in his retinue during these days—this rule was made in order to prevent a possible *coup d'état* against the Emperor. At the Coronation itself, of course, these followers to the utmost were allowed in. Ras Hailu, King of Gojjam, and richest of feudal chiefs, was reported to have 25,000 retainers with him. Ras Hailu is now a State prisoner for having taken part in the abortive attempt, made in 1932, to restore Lij Yassu to the throne—but that, as Kipling would say, is another story.

Even a casino had been erected, and it was rumoured that the Emperor had engaged a special ballet from Austria to entertain his guests. The ballet did not materialize, but some enterprising person, probably the owner of the new casino, had imported some European dancing girls. The casino was tawdry, and the whole show was extremely third rate. Needless to say, it was

not an item on the official programme, and we went only after the royal and other guests had departed. The casino remained open for some time after, but was never a success, and was closed down. We saw the girls giving a show at Djibouti, working their way home.

It may not be out of place to give here an account of the escape of Lij Yassu in 1932 and the attempt made to depose the present Emperor. Lij Yassu, when he was overthrown in 1916, was made a State prisoner, and a chief in North-east Abyssinia was given the custody of him, and if he escaped the chief's life was to be forfeit. Lij Yassu was not cruelly treated, he had his personal liberty, but his life was not exactly happy. After the Coronation of Haile Sellassie in 1930 Ras Hailu connived at the escape of Lij Yassu, and some time in June, 1932, my husband learned, through some *negadies* who had come in with produce, that a small party was escorting through the Mulu Valley, about forty miles North of Addis Ababa, a person who looked suspiciously like Lij Yassu. My husband made further inquiries and it was confirmed that it was Lij Yassu and that Ras Hailu was supporting him. My husband's information was keeping pace with incidents and was being cabled to London, much against the wishes of the authorities, who, naturally, did not want the country to know that Lij Yassu was going to make an attempt to regain the throne. It is a moot point as to whether the country would have supported Lij Yassu. The attempt was "nipped in the bud," Lij Yassu and Ras Hailu were arrested and banished, and were kept in close imprisonment in the Tchercher Province.

To retrace my steps to the Coronation. As can be imagined, prices for all and every article, accommodation, etc., rose sky-high in Addis Ababa. One hotel was charging £4 per day per head, and then accommodating the "victim" in dirty converted stables. Other charges

were in proportion. One world-renowned travel agency was making a special feature of the Coronation and expected to have several hundred take advantage of the opportunity to see a little-known land under the most favourable conditions. They sent a special representative well in advance to make the necessary arrangements, but his mission was a failure. There was no accommodation available: the hotels had been commandeered by the authorities; there were no tents or marquees to be had locally and they would have to be imported at enormous cost; and finally there wasn't a suitable convenient site for a camp. The whole project was cancelled, as the difficulties were too great. I believe only one independent visitor came to the Coronation, and she wasn't at all pleased with the comforts or the value received in exchange for the prices charged.

As a pleasing compliment to the Emperor three "Fairey" bombers flew up from Aden to take part in the festivities. They arrived punctually at 3 p.m., and a difficult landing, owing to the limited space of the race-course, was beautifully executed. All the British visitors and residents were present at the race-course, and we had the pleasure of seeing quite a lot of the airmen, who frequently came to our house during their short stay in Addis Ababa.

A great reception was given at the station for each foreign representative as he arrived, and the streets were filled all day with troops marching to form guards of honour, while guns were continuously booming in salute. What amazed me was the band. Not many weeks before they had looked a ragged lot of urchins when they were learning the various national anthems. Now they were smartly dressed, well-drilled, and really played the various anthems sufficiently well to be recognized, without a single sheet of music in front of them!

My husband, as correspondent for a Press agency, had

been granted permission to travel on the special train when His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester left Djibouti. He travelled down, too, in comfort on another special, and was able at Djibouti to give first hand news of the Duke's arrival and journey up to Addis Ababa. In addition to the Royal party the train conveyed Sir John Maffey, the Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Sir Harold Kittermaster, Governor of British Somaliland, the Commander-in-Chief of the East Indies Squadron, and the Marines Band of H.M.S. *Effingham*. The train was crowded, every seat was occupied, but a German baron, an American lecturer and his wife, and two English journalists squeezed themselves in somehow, and had to sleep on the floor of the guard's van.

At the important stopping-places there were guards of honour and at Dire Dawa, where breakfast was served, troops lined the road up to the Governor's residence. The hospitality offered on the journey was overwhelming; servants were continuously offering champagne, Pómmard, whisky, beer, caviare and pâté-de-foie sandwiches. Even the bandsmen shared in this hospitality. At Addas, two hours before Addis Ababa was reached, breakfast was served and an opportunity given for the Royal Party and guests to change into uniform. Champagne and Pómmard were offered even at breakfast at seven in the morning! Never before have bandsmen partaken of such fare. Everyone was glad to reach the end of the journey—perhaps because of this surfeit of hospitality.

The train was due in at Addis Ababa at nine a.m., and punctually at this hour steamed into the station. As the Royal Party left the train, troops in khaki on the platform presented arms smartly, the Abyssinian band played the British National Anthem, and the Emperor stepped down from the golden throne on which he had been sitting, and advanced to meet the Duke of Gloucester.



(Above) The Dugna Market in Addis Ababa, with its



(Above) A typical view of the Goré Province
(Below) A native bazaar in Addis Alem

The band played the anthem to the very last verse, whilst the Emperor and the Duke stood rigidly at attention. One wondered how the Emperor would meet his guest, and what they would say to each other—as a matter of fact, neither spoke a word. The guard of honour was inspected, and the various guests and their suites were then presented to the Emperor and the whole imposing show came to an end. It was remarkable; all the special British guests were over six feet in height, and in their plumed helmets they seemed to tower above the Abyssinians, tall as these are. It made one proud to be British.

There was only one more royal guest to arrive, Prince Udine of Italy, and the stage was set for the Coronation of the Emperor.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE Cathedral of St. George, in the grounds of which an annexe had been specially built for the Coronation ceremony, is not exactly pleasing to the eye, and had no particular style of architecture. It is stone-built, octagonal in shape, surmounted by a large dome. The annexe called for no particular comment; it was a temporary structure and served its purpose. The glass, a good many panes of which were broken in transit from Europe, was fitted to the windows only a day or two before the ceremony. Inside, the ceiling and walls were draped with white cotton which turned the blazing sunshine into a dim religious light appropriate to the ceremony that was to take place, and which served to mellow the newness of the building and disguise the hurried finish.

Carpets and rugs covered the whole floor, and the main portion, for the ordinary visitors and guests, held every conceivable kind of chair. A barrier of red cord separated this portion from the space reserved for the thrones and seats for the various Missions. Two gorgeous thrones—twelve feet apart—each beneath a great canopy supported upon four golden pillars and with a replica of the Crown of Ethiopia at the point of the canopies, occupied the centre of the stage. The throne of the Emperor was draped in crimson and gold velvet, whilst that of the Empress was in pale blue and gold. The altar was also draped in crimson and gold. Ornate gilt chairs for the distinguished guests were ranged on either side of the thrones, and the background was made up of crimson velvet curtains.

The whole church was surrounded by troops, and the priests had not been allowed to leave the building, whilst the crowns and insignia had been guarded day and night by one hundred picked men.

The statue to Menelik, on the site of the famous old hangman's tree, was gilded, and showed the old warrior on a rampant horse, decked out in gorgeous native trappings. It rose thirty feet high and was a fitting memorial to the maker of modern Ethiopia. Gardens had been laid out round the statue and the whole square had been artistically arranged—a very different picture to the old.

My husband and I had made several tours of the town, generally early in the morning, had made copious notes, taken photos, inspected the church, seen the statue to Menelik, and had typed and cabled all descriptive and advance information to London. From a study of the official programme, conversations with different high officials, a close inspection of the crowns and coronets, Imperial emblems, State robes, etc., my husband had prepared, in advance, his account of the Coronation, and this only needed "touching up" before being cabled immediately after the ceremony had taken place. Fortunately, however, on the evening before the ceremony a word was whispered in his ear that the telegraph office would be closed for the whole of Sunday, the day of the Coronation. The cable was therefore despatched at once—it took several pages—and we prayed that no hitch would take place. As it happened all went according to plan. My husband cabled shortly first thing on Monday morning that his description of the Coronation ceremony could be released, and thereby made a journalistic "scoop." The other Press correspondents rushed off to the telegraph office immediately after the ceremony had actually taken place, only to find the place closed and no cajolery, blandishments, bribery or threats could get their messages accepted, and these were

consequently not sent off until the Monday, by which time my husband's account was appearing in the London papers.

Life was now very gay in the capital, and the days did not seem long enough. The Missions were busy calling upon the Emperor and one another, presenting their gifts and paying their compliments, and guns were booming at all hours of the day. From our veranda we could see very plainly all that was happening at the Palace. Troops, infantry and cavalry, were continually passing through the streets. Each Mission was escorted by a troop of cavalry, and guards of honour were being furnished by the infantry. The soldiers in their new uniforms looked smart and workmanlike, but the final touch appeared to be lacking, as they were barefooted. Europeans appeared daily in full diplomatic dress and uniforms, and some of them looked quite uncomfortable in the strong sunshine. Receptions were being held daily by the delegates at the various legations to meet their own nationals. The tailors were busy and I passed many an old resident unrecognizable in his new and formal clothes.

Big dinners were being given nightly, when women in Paris fashions sat among Abyssinian chiefs in their blue velvet cloaks. The local ladies who had ordered their frocks from home were bewailing their luck, and inability to compete. Owing to the congestion on the railway the postal service was disorganized and parcels were held up at Djibouti, and amongst these were dresses intended to be worn during the festivities. Some of these dresses did not reach their destinations for many weeks after. Each train was loaded up to full capacity, but there were too many parcels, and these were "dumped" in the Djibouti post office. Still more parcels arrived and these were taken straight to the waiting trains or added to the dump in the courtyard awaiting dispatch; no effort was made to send off the first arrivals, now buried deep.

Some of the first parcels to be received therefore in Djibouti were among the last to be despatched to Addis Ababa. Fortunately my frocks had been ordered well in advance and had been received by me well before the rush.

I was very lucky, too, in the way of being present at the various functions. My husband, as a Press representative, had got a pass which admitted him to every function, and this pass was made out specially to include me, as a resident. If I wanted to attend a function all that I had to do was to advise the official in charge of the arrangements, and a place was found for me. All functions, dinners, receptions were alike, and when I had been to one or two of each I had been to them all. There were, of course, the purely British functions and the races, and other ceremonies of a like nature, which I was glad to go to.

The days were feverishly busy for both of us. For the first two or three days of Coronation week it was rushing from one ceremony to another, getting home whenever an opportunity offered and typing out cables. I once saw a distinguished Pressman actually typing out, on a portable machine on his knee, his account of one show whilst he was being motored to another. We were continually dining out these days—an important cable had to be sent off and we were late, and whilst I was typing out what my good man was dictating to me he was undressing me, so that no time should be lost when I went to change.

The first official drive by the Emperor was to a gathering of chiefs and notables who had been invited to inspect the new Rolls-Royce ordered for the Imperial use. The body was royal blue and black, relieved by thin lines of gold, whilst the bonnet and dashboard were silver-plated. A special dickey had been built to accommodate two personal guards and umbrella-holders. Fully armed soldiers and followers accompanied the car when it was

taken for its first outing, the guard sitting on the mudguards and running-boards. Some of the chiefs had never in their lives seen a vehicle like this and were quite at a loss to understand how it was propelled without a donkey or a mule in front and why a water-like fluid should be capable of making it go. The functioning of an internal combustion engine was quite beyond their comprehension, even if it could have been explained to them.

The diversity of gifts presented by the Missions to the Emperor and the Empress was remarkable, and ranged from aeroplanes to Rhenish wines. Some of the other gifts were statues, cinemas, radios, typewriters, refrigerators, old Venetian lace, and rose bushes. Some of the American industries made individual gifts—they were all accepted—it was a good opportunity for “boosting” American products. The gifts of H.M. King George were a gold sceptre, suitably engraved, to the Emperor, and an ivory sceptre to the Empress, and were presented by the Duke of Gloucester at an Audience. The Emperor was also presented with the insignia of the Royal Victorian Order, only for ruling Sovereigns; whilst the Heir-Apparent was decorated with the G.C.V.O.; Ras Kassa with the Order of the British Empire; and Belatin Gaeta Herui, the Foreign Minister, with the K.C.V.O. His son George Herui, who had been to Cambridge and was attached to the Royal Party, was made a Member of the Victorian Order. Immediately after the ceremony the Emperor granted audiences to Sir John Maffey, Governor-General of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and Sir Harold Kittermaster, Governor of British Somaliland.

The first official ceremony was the unveiling of the Menelik statue by the Emperor. In the early hours of the morning, long before the ceremony was timed to start, great crowds of wild and woolly tribesmen, mounted and unmounted, rode through the streets towards the monu-

ment. All were armed, some carrying rifles (obsolete in most cases), and some with long spears and heavy hide shields. It was brought home to one how much a rifle was part and parcel of the gear of these men from the interior—as much as an umbrella carried by an Englishman.

The mounted men dashed wildly through the crowds shouting out their weird cries and calls. Some of these calls were very penetrating, and one of them—very similar to the “yodel”—carries a long distance. I have heard boys and men in charge of cattle calling out to someone far away, and a reply comes soon after—it seems to echo in the surrounding hills. On the railway line they have developed a noise of their own; with one finger in their mouth, they blow out their cheeks, and with the other hand tap the cheeks quickly: a peculiar indescribable sound is emitted and one which certainly draws attention.

The square in which Menelik's statue stood waiting to be unveiled was lined with troops, and everything was in readiness for the arrival of the Emperor, but the band of the *Effingham* was absent, and it was understood that this was to be an attraction, after the unveiling. There was much scurrying and hustling and eventually the band did arrive. The Emperor had personally selected the spot on which the band was to be during the ceremony. The Belgian officers, training the Abyssian Army, desired that spot and rode the band off, who thereupon retired to their billets. Explanations followed, the spot was vacated, the Emperor delayed his arrival, and the band was in place to play the Abyssinian National Anthem when His Majesty arrived. The Emperor stopped in front, his hand at the salute, and he was visibly gratified at a British band being able to play his national anthem. I believe it was the first time British troops had ever appeared in the present capital, as certainly it was the first time the

Abyssinian National Anthem had been played so well.

The Emperor's throne and many gilt chairs were placed in front of the statue, and carpets and rugs had been laid in front of them, and covered the steps leading to the statue. The Emperor, conspicuous in his purple cape, lined green and red, stiffly encrusted with gold lace, and wearing the chain of the Victorian Order, greeted his guests and took up his position near the throne; near by his Ministers of State dressed in gorgeous coloured robes, took up their places; tribal chiefs wearing head-dresses of lions' skins and manes, carrying spears and shields, sorted themselves round their Emperor. Clergy, in black hoods and with their vividly coloured umbrellas, grouped themselves around their Emperor and mingled in with the Missions, in sombre black and gold diplomatic uniforms and brave coloured uniforms of crack regiments.

Backed by a surging, pressing crowd of townsmen and tribesmen, who were kept in place by troops and policemen, the picture was an impressive one in its vivid colouring and African surroundings. The Emperor made an address of a few words, pulled the cord that unveiled the statue in all its golden splendour, and after a short interval left the scene. The various guests also departed, and, as soon as they were clear, the crowds in the square surged upon the statue, and were reinforced by those who had lined the streets, and all gave themselves up in earnest to the Coronation spirit, whilst they admired all the efforts that had been made to make their capital so gay.

So ended the first act; the small British community fought their way back home to lunch, and to prepare for the dinner that night and the Coronation next day. The Emperor was not so fortunate; he had two or three engagements to fulfil before he retired to the church where he was to pray the whole night.

The public ceremony of the Coronation was not to be until after ten a.m., but long before that hour the

streets were crowded with throngs making their way to the Cathedral to get the best positions possible. Inside the main hall of the annexe was filled, and slowly the Diplomatic Missions filed in to their allotted seats. Rather later than the officially appointed hour it was whispered that the private ceremony was over, and from the Cathedral itself, where he had spent the night, into a blazing assembly of colour the new Emperor walked, bare-headed, dressed in a simple white velvet cloak and attended only by four youths.

The picture was at that moment complete and enthralling, and was a riot of colour as can only be seen in the Orient. The various Missions in their full dress, the Diplomatic Corps, distinguished visitors in uniforms of European regiments, provided a background against which stood out the great Rases and other nobles of the Ethiopian Empire, elaborately dressed in white silks and velvets and blazing with jewels; the choristers in white and silver and the priests in their vestments of white and gold, with their jewelled mitres and crowns.

After he had taken his seat on the throne the Empress entered, wearing a dress of pale pink, and veiled with white chiffon from head to foot. As they entered a choir of boys, especially brought from Egypt, chanted the Psalms of David, beating cymbals and triangles whilst they sang. The choir chanted continuously, as the Coptic Church demands, throughout the service, and very monotonous it sounded too. Programmes printed in Amharic, Arabic and French giving the order of the service had been handed round, but I barely looked at mine, and noticed that no one else was studying theirs, as our attention was riveted on the scene that was being enacted before us. Tapers were now lighted, and we could see on tables, fronting the altar, the royal insignia, crown, sceptre, orb, sword, signet ring, lances, a

gold-bound Bible, a gold inkstand and pen, and the Imperial robes. These symbols of power and majesty received the Archbishop's blessings and were offered singly to the Emperor whilst the priests ceaselessly chanted.

First came the robe of purple velvet, heavily embroidered in gold, which the Emperor put on in place of the white cloak he was wearing on his entrance. Four of his Generals stepped forward to assist him in making the change. The sword and sceptre and orb were anointed in turn, and then the Archbishop anointed the head of the Emperor with oil, in preparation for the actual crowning. A red cloth was draped round his head, the golden crown was placed upon it and the Emperor stood up, robed, crowned, and imperial. After the Archbishop had blessed the Emperor a solemn procession was formed, the Emperor leading, and proceeded to the open-air throne, where, with the Diplomatic Missions seated on either side, the Emperor received the fealty of leading Rases and nobles.

The Heir-Apparent and the Emperor's eldest daughter were then crowned, together with some of the Rases, including Hailu, and their wives. This afforded us an opportunity to take in more fully the colours, workmanship and other details of the royal robes, crowns, coronets, etc. The Emperor's velvet cloak was a thing of wonder to behold, a rich shade of purple with heavy gold ornamentations and embroidery. The skirt was of finest cotton, hand woven and light as gossamer; the trousers were of white silk, cut in the traditional Abyssinian style, tight up to the knees. The train was specially embroidered and was a masterpiece of craftsmanship.

The crown was reputed to be of Abyssinian gold and to have been made by a local Armenian jeweller. There were various reports that one of the old crowns would be used, but as that of King Theodore had only recently been restored by the British it was thought that a new one

would be more fitting. It was heavily studded with jewels and the principal emblems were embodied in the design—the Lion of Judah facing the rising sun; King Solomon's seal; the cross of Ethiopia; the Abyssinian star (emblematic of the Star of the East which was followed by the Kings at the Birth of Christ, one of the Kings, according to tradition, being an Ethiopian).

The coronets for the Prince and Princess were mounted on blue velvet, while those of the nobility were of crimson velvet, surmounted with bay wreaths, and were made by a London firm of jewellers. I believe it is the first time in history that coronets were worn by the Abyssinian nobility. There seemed to be some little delay with regard to the coronet for the Prince—there was a lot of whispering, scurrying of officials, and during the proceedings a messenger arrived at the Church with a hat-box. I wondered if the Prince's coronet had been forgotten and been sent for in a hurry! At any rate the coronet the Prince was wearing appeared too small for him, and was uncomfortable, and would not stay on his head, as I observed that whilst he was going down the steps of the church after the ceremony an attendant kept putting the coronet in position.

Whilst the main congregation were moving about, preparing to leave the church, I noticed an Abyssinian official carrying a tray full of Ethiopian decorations, and which he seemed to be distributing freely amongst the audience. He had given a star to a certain European, perhaps the "oldest inhabitant," and this was proudly pinned to the recipient's breast, who walked back, highly elated, to his friends. A heated discussion followed.

The newly decorated person made his way back through the crowd and violently and agitatedly pulled the coat-tails of the official with the decorations. His request apparently was acceded to and he was given another

decoration which he, in turn, proudly pinned on to his friend's breast.

To commemorate his Coronation the Emperor instituted two new Orders—the Star of Ethiopia for men, and The Queen of Saba (Sheba) for women.

Immediately the Emperor had been crowned a salute of guns was fired, then stopped, and commenced again after the Empress had been crowned, in all 101 guns.

Before the crowd left the church I slipped out with my husband to make a final tour, and to our surprise came across parties of machine-gunners in position with their guns commanding all the approaches to the church. It was typical and significant that wherever the Emperor went at this period, and for some time after the actual Coronation, he was escorted by a machine-gun party. Whether this was purely for show, or whether they were able to use the gun in an emergency, or remedy a stoppage, history does not relate, as they were never called upon, in our time, to protect their Emperor.

Whilst waiting for the Emperor to come out from the church we noticed the "Fairey" bombers from Aden circling overhead, and they provided one of the greatest thrills to the crowds below. They were supposed to fly over at eleven a.m., and were punctual, but the ceremony had taken longer than was expected, so, to while away the time, they flew out to Harwash, a day's journey by train from Addis Ababa. They were back again in time, and as the Emperor came out they, and the Abyssinian plane which had joined them, circled over, the British bombers performing aerial acrobatics. A great number of the tribesmen, who had never seen formation flying before, were tremendously excited, especially as the planes suddenly extended, each pilot making his salute separately.

There was quite a lot to watch as we waited. The Abyssinian plane dropped leaflets bearing the Imperial

proclamation on to the crowds, who scrambled to obtain these, and were wild in their jubilation if they got one. Then the ex-Kaiser's coach with the magnificent horses and the resplendent coachman drew up to wait for the Emperor and his Consort, but the horses were fidgety, and one of them got his leg over the traces. He would not be quietened, and eventually the pair had to be taken out.

As the Emperor came out in all his Imperial Robes, and under a canopy carried by nobles, photographers and cinema-operators rushed forward to get photos of him, and very obligingly he stood still whilst cameras clicked and operators got busy. He stepped into his coach and, followed by the Missions, Chiefs of his Empire, in motor-cars, with followers, and native bands playing, he drove slowly out through lines of troops and the more picturesque white-clad retainers of Rases and the wild-looking veterans in their lion and leopard skin cloaks, who gave him deep-throated salutations. During the drive back to the palace the Emperor held in one hand his sceptre and in the other the orb—traditional symbols of his terrestrial power.

Despite the fact that much of the native glamour was missing, under a thin veneer of Westernization, the Coronation was of unprecedented splendour, with a barbaric background that for sheer magnificence of colouring would be difficult to surpass.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THERE was not much rest for the Emperor, or for us, that Coronation day. After a short rest from the trying ordeal of his Coronation the Emperor visited the three leading churches around Addis Ababa, to offer thanks. He was accompanied by his chiefs, with their followers, and native bands played along the route the procession took, whilst the members of the Foreign Missions and Diplomatic Corps were amongst the interested spectators.

From our veranda we watched, during the late afternoon, the active preparations that were being made, up to the very last minute, for the banquet that was being given that evening by the Emperor to his distinguished guests. Lines of *guragis* could be seen entering the palace gates with cases of wines and foodstuffs on their heads, whilst the courtyard was a mass of living humanity running to and fro, all carrying something. The State banquet was to be followed, next day, by a feast to his chiefs, troops, followers and other selected subjects.

When dusk fell, and it was time for me to go in and dress, the whole palace sprang into light; numerous electric bulbs outlined the main buildings and the banquet and audience halls. It was like a fairy scene from our garden, and all our servants and their friends assembled to see the wonderful illuminations and to wait for the fireworks that were to follow. They had a vantage spot, as the view across the small valley was uninterrupted and they would be free from the jostling and discomfort of the crowds. Cries of praise and admiration from them floated into my room as I dressed.

As we entered, the audience hall presented a wonderful scene of Oriental splendour. The Emperor and Empress, standing on the dais by their golden thrones, received their guests and then led the way to the State banquet hall, decorated with red plush and gilding, where electric chandeliers threw a brilliant light that set the jewels and decorations of the guests sparkling. The Duke of Gloucester, the Prince of Udine, Members of the Foreign Delegations, the leading Rases and High Officers of State were present, and the uniforms and decorations of the foreigners vied in brilliance with the dainty frocks of the ladies and the many-coloured silks and velvets of the Ethiopian princes and nobles, whilst the evening-dress of the non-official guests provided an effective background. It was estimated there were 700 guests present. The Marines Band of the *Effingham*, in full dress, was in attendance and played selections of airs from the light operas.

The Emperor and Empress sat together at the head of a horseshoe shaped table, thus for once doing away with the time-honoured tradition that they must sit at separate tables. The Duke of Gloucester had a place of honour among the other foreign representatives. Another unusual feature was the presence of Abyssinian ladies, who wore their ceremonial long blue capes, with high standing collars. Their hair was dressed in the usual Abyssinian style—brushed upwards, and very boyish.

Beautifully worked services of gold and silver were used for the banquet, and every imaginable delicacy was served—the Emperor has a French chef. There was a galaxy of glasses in front of each guest, and one glass was filled with the Emperor's famous *tej*, although every other kind of wine was offered. This *tej* was a clear yellow liquid, slightly effervescent, and was quite different from what I had ever seen before. It had, I believe, been maturing for many years in the palace vaults, and

was somewhat "heady" in consequence. The sequence of courses was a little disconcerting, but otherwise the banquet was a perfect reproduction of what a European State dinner should be. The service was popularly supposed to be made from Abyssinian gold; I rather doubt it, though, as Abyssinian gold is very hard, and a guest sitting opposite me had difficulty with a gold fork which crumpled up, bent in two, as he was using it. His furtive attempts to straighten it were amusing.

The whole scene was reminiscent of an Arabian Nights entertainment.

After dinner the Emperor received another thousand guests. An elaborate display of fireworks was on the programme and had actually commenced, but an unfortunate accident caused all of them to explode at once, and there was a great crackling and banging, as of rapid gun and rifle fire, and the whole sky seemed to be alight as rockets, catherine wheels and set pieces shot up in all directions. No harm was done, but the evening closed earlier than was intended. Our houseboys next morning were very anxious to know what had happened; they told me it looked as if a fight had begun and that one of the great Rases had tried to kill the Emperor.

The next day the Emperor entertained his subjects in the traditional Abyssinian manner at a great banquet from which intruders and Europeans were strictly excluded. Again the vantage point on our veranda was useful. The chiefs and nobles were in full dress, and all were armed to the teeth. We estimated that about 30,000 were fed that day, and there seemed to be some sort of disorder in the scramble for places. The chiefs appeared to be sitting at separate tables, properly equipped, and many courses were served. The entertainment of the "rank and file" seemed to be simpler. They squatted in front of low trestle tables and were served in three relays. We could see that large joints were carried down between

the tables, and as each guest carved for himself we assumed that the beef was uncooked. Liberal supplies of the local beer *talla* were also served, and meat and drinks were served until it appeared the the guests were incapable of consuming or drinking any more.

The next day was given up to the great military review on the Filwaha (boiling water) Plain near the station. This made an ideal parade ground, as there were banks on one side, where the guests and spectators sat under marquees. There must have been quite 200,000 people that morning, all wending their way to the review. The streets were lined with Imperial troops, who afterwards took part in the actual review. The Emperor's personal bodyguard in green, yellow, and red tunics (the national colours) were conspicuous, but the gem of the whole setting was the Emperor's personal attendant. Clad in a resplendent cloak, he was mounted on a gaily caparisoned mule, and when he followed the Imperial car during the review he and his animal positively scintillated in the brilliant sunshine. Thousands of troops of both the old and new armies were paraded, headed by the chiefs in their brilliant native costumes but wearing jewel-trimmed cloaks, and with their mules or ponies decked out in gaudy-coloured trappings. The Abyssinian generals were especially picturesque in their busbies made from lions' manes, and different-coloured cloaks embroidered in gold or silver. The band of the *Effingham* was present and played during the review.

The troops were not drawn up in formation, but lined the far side of the parade ground. The Emperor passed along these ranks in his car, followed by the Duke of Gloucester and heads of the various Missions. When this inspection was over the Emperor returned to his saluting base, and the troops marched past the royal marquee headed by the cavalry and infantry of the Regular Army. It was an extremely creditable show by the Army,

considering that they had been trained for only nine months.

At the conclusion of the formal review there was a display of horsemanship, spear-throwing and games dear to the heart of an Abyssinian—jousting, tilting and waging mock war—to be followed by the grand finale, as thousands of horsemen withdrew and then suddenly thundered towards the royal marquee and spectators, and pulled up on their horses' haunches. This manoeuvre was repeated three times, the troops recounting their valorous deeds and proclaiming their loyalty to the Emperor. It was a thrilling spectacle, but "as far removed from modern traditions as Addis Ababa is from Salisbury Plain."

Whilst waiting for our car I had the opportunity of speaking to some of our soldiers and sailors, attached to our royal and official guests, and, on asking them their opinion of the show, they were unanimous in expressing their admiration for the way in which the review had been staged, but more especially at the material that was available for making into a modern army, as every man there appeared to be not only a potential soldier but a hard-fighting warrior with a lust for war, and, ill-equipped as they were, given modern weapons they would be a dangerous people to meet in their own country. Incidentally, my husband and I once rode straight into the "army" quite by accident, as they were returning from quelling some rebellious chief. We were out riding and as we came up the hill towards the road leading to the palace we were stopped by the long procession. I dismounted, but my husband remained mounted to get a better view and to criticize the troops as they went by. They were flushed with victory and were chanting, and their drums and bands were working hard.

As the Emperor approached the noise increased, and I looked at my husband to see that "Lux" was playing up. As my husband took off his hat to salute the

Emperor, "Lux" took it into his head to stand right up. The crowd would have laughed if my husband had dismounted then, so he stuck on, and finished his salute as if nothing extraordinary were taking place beneath him. It was done in the grand style, and might have been done for effect! The Emperor smilingly acknowledged the salute. The long procession seemed endless—the regular army was followed by tribesmen all armed with rifles, spears, and shields; machine-guns on mules looked workmanlike. My husband was impressed with the bearing of the men, and said he would rather have them behind him, than in front, in a "scrap."

A special issue of postage stamps had been issued to commemorate the Coronation, and these are very artistic in design. Only one more issue to add to the numerous other issues of Abyssinian stamps—collectors must be getting tired of them! The freeing of about a hundred prisoners, convicted of minor offences, was another event of the Coronation week. The Emperor also distributed *timoons* (the smallest silver coin) amongst all children within his call. Thousands of children, of all colours, ran eagerly towards the Palace when they heard that there was to be a free distribution of these coins by the Emperor himself, and there was some delay by some of the lucky recipients prostrating themselves in front of their Emperor.

A special race meeting was held the day following the review, and this was attended by the Emperor in State, together with the Duke of Gloucester and the other Missions. It was a Gala Day for Addis Ababa Society! The Emperor drove up the racecourse with the Duke of Gloucester, but left with the Prince of Udine. Etiquette in the matter of procedure was carefully kept throughout the ceremonies and festivities, but it could not help being observed that the Duke was the most considered guest of the Emperor—as the son of an Emperor. Enormous

crowds lined the circuit of the racecourse, and all the chiefs and officers of State were present. The band of the *Effingham* and two Abyssinian bands played alternately during the afternoon. The Emperor and the Missions, with some of the Rases, had lunch in the clubhouse, and a special marquee had to be erected to accommodate the overflow.

The meeting was most successful, the races were interesting and a delightful day was spent, as the racecourse is ideally situated, surrounded as it is with eucalyptus trees and with magnificent views of the mountains in the near distance. The Emperor presented a magnificent centrepiece, a champagne set for twelve valued at £300, and this was won by a French lady whose husband was attached to the French Legation. The Duke of Gloucester presented a cup for the steeplechase which was won, appropriately enough, by an Englishman, whilst "Lux," our beautiful pony, came in second. The Duke handed the cup to the winner, whilst the Emperor presented an Abyssinian sovereign to us, and we have this let into a cup as a souvenir of the race. My good man was a judge, and I was in charge of the Pari-Mutuel and sweepstake, so that we were fit for nothing but bed at the end of the day.

There were visits by the Missions to the new National Museum, another State banquet and dance, and a picnic given by the Emperor out at Addis Alem, and receptions to finish up this memorable week. A banquet was given at the British Legation at which the Emperor and Empress and about sixty guests were present. A special cake, standing over five feet in height, and weighing over 180 lb. had been sent out specially from London, and was much admired. After the banquet the guests, each carrying yellow, green or red torches, formed a procession along the terrace to watch the bonfires, of the same colours, which had been lighted on the tops of the hills behind the

Legations. These were visible to all Addis Ababa and the country beyond, and created considerable interest. This was followed by a Somali war dance, the dancers being specially brought from British Somaliland for the purpose. The *Effingham* band played during dinner, and afterwards for dancing.

The various Missions were now leaving Addis Ababa, and the town was gradually resuming its normal life. The Duke of Gloucester, however, remained on for a few days, as he was going on a hunting trip, and on Saturday afternoon a horse show, for the British only, was held on the racecourse, H.R.H. riding one of the ponies entered and Major Stanyforth acting as judge. The first prize was won by a girl's pony as being the best mannered and trained.

On Armistice Day the Duke and suite honoured the little English church by their presence at the Special Service, and on the following day the Royal hunting party left Addis Ababa for their trip through the Arussi country. The Emperor made special arrangements for his royal visitor and made a gift of mules and horses for the trip. The small British community were present at the station to say farwell, and this finally brought the Coronation festivities of the Emperor to an end.

It was a gay, busy fortnight, with function on top of function, and, looking back, it seems like some dream, taken out of a fairy story.

It was reported that the Emperor had spent two million dollars of his own money and that the Government raised another two million by special taxes, to make the Coronation worthy and memorable, and right royally had this been achieved.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ALMOST the first words I heard on our first arrival in Addis Ababa, some years ago, were: "When will the Italian Flag fly over the Palace?" and these words were repeated time and again, sometimes as a joke, sometimes seriously, during the time we were in Abyssinia.

My husband's business did not permit him to express, publicly, his opinion on the country or the Government in which we were working; and, as a woman, I could possibly have no views that were worth listening to, and if I had, I was discreet enough not to air them. I was fortunate enough to come into contact with all classes of men in Abyssinia—Englishmen and foreigners in official circles, Abyssinians of rank and Government officials, business men, men with "missions" and others passing through, and was allowed to be an interested listener to many a conversation dealing with business conditions, the administration of the country, functioning of Government departments, the Emperor and Imperial household, future of the country, political treaties and friendships; and with a reputation for not repeating what I heard tongues wagged freely in my presence whilst I knitted or did some fancy work, or pretended to read, or merely listened.

I am naturally observant and have a retentive memory and as all these talks dealt with, or bore very closely upon, the life I was leading, I trust I am able to form an accurate idea of, and to pass an opinion upon, events in Abyssinia which have brought that country into the limelight of

world politics. I trust, too, it will not be a case of "an angel rushing in where fools fear to tread."

Since the Wal Wal incident in November last, which has served Italy with a pretext for preparing for action openly, there has been an effusion of newspaper articles on the subject of Abyssinia, the state of the country, and so on, by writers who have not been within a hundred miles of the country, whose experiences of the country are almost prehistoric, or of travellers who have passed through and, naturally, have learned all that there is to know about the country.

Until the Coronation of the present Emperor in 1930 I don't suppose many people in England, or elsewhere for that matter, had any but the vaguest ideas of Abyssinia or where it is. I remember, just before I went out to Abyssinia for the first time, saying good-bye to a very learned professor who expressed a hope that the country I was going to would not try and copy "its neighbour." I looked puzzled as to what he was referring to, and he enlightened me by saying he meant Afghanistan! Quite recently, too, a retired business man, talking to me of the impending trouble between Italy and Abyssinia, spoke as if Afghanistan and Abyssinia were close neighbours, and looked incredulous when I told him that the two countries were in totally different continents! A sailorman, too, who has long been on the run to the East did not even know where Djibouti was.

Frankly, all my sympathies are with Abyssinia in her present troubles with Italy. It reminds me forcibly of a big schoolboy bullying a small child to get possession of some sweets. I admit freely that Abyssinia is a backward, almost primitive, country, and that there are many wrongs and practices to be redressed and put an end to, but that does not give Italy the right to take upon herself the task of putting matters right, and to use force to gain territory for her own surplus population. We are hearing

quite a lot about Italy and her hatred of the slave-traffic, but what has she done to help Abyssinia in suppressing this? She is as close a neighbour of Abyssinia as is Great Britain, but I cannot remember hearing of any serious or prolonged attempt on her part to deal with this as has Great Britain. Massawah, the port for Eritrea, is closer to Abyssinia, and the sea-route used by the slave-traders, than Aden, and yet our country has worked almost single-handed and done her utmost to make this slave-trading business a risky one and hardly worth while for those engaged in it.

No, this excuse does not hold water, in spite of the outcries by frenzied Italian journalists, who, at the behest of Mussolini, seek to justify Italy's preparation for war against Abyssinia in the eyes of the world, on this pretext. From conditions now prevailing in Italy under the Duce—restriction of free speech, close censorship, commandeering capital, interference with private lives, and so on—a person can hardly call his soul his own in that country, and the condition is more nearly approaching "slavery" in my idea than the conditions under which many an Abyssinian "slave" lives.

As regards security of her borders, and the supposed menace to Italian subjects by Abyssinian outlaws and raiders, British Somaliland has an Abyssinian frontier nearly as long as that of Italian Somaliland, and the British have had much more trouble than Italy with roaming and lawless tribes in that part of the world. The Sudan and Kenya borders, too, are considerably longer than the Eritrean frontier, and in the past slave-raids into the Sudan have been frequent, but I cannot call to mind any slave-trading into Eritrea, the population of which is Abyssinian. Great Britain, far more than Italy, has had a lot of trouble on this vexed question of slave-raiding, and yet we have not used it as an excuse to annex Abyssinia. Great Britain watches and polices her

borders of 2,000 miles, and surely Italy could do the same just as effectively, and at much less cost, on her Abyssinian borders of about 1,000 miles.

There are Belgian coffee plantations in Abyssinia; there was a German cotton plantation; there are many French and Swedish subjects growing coffee in a small way; there is also a road concession in Western Abyssinia held by a British concern. All these mean that money has been put into the country and work provided for Abyssinians. Japan, too, is interested, and there has been talk of cotton being grown on an extensive scale in Abyssinia by Japan. Has Italy any serious interests of this nature in the country? Not to my knowledge.

Whilst I was in Abyssinia a large Italian plane was allowed to land, by permission of the Emperor, in the capital. I think every member of the personnel of the plane and every passenger had a high-sounding title. Their mission was to obtain permission to establish a regular Italian air-service between Eritrea in the North and Italian Somaliland in the South. This permission was not granted, as the Emperor had hopes of establishing his own air service with neighbouring countries.

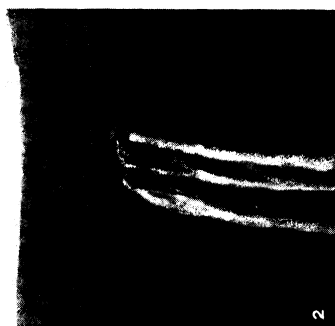
The machine soon left, but it was not long before two of the airmen were back in Addis Ababa, but not by air this time. Their new quest was to establish a huge trading corporation with a vast capital of goodness knows how many millions of pounds sterling—I always tremble when people speak of millions and milliards. I know it was a very large sum indeed, and would swamp every previous attempt at trading. The proposed corporation was not only to trade but was to work concessions, grow coffee, build roads, mine for gold and platinum, exploit the timber and would, practically, create an Italian trading monopoly. This would have been far better for Italy, and for Abyssinia, than all this talk about, and expenditure of money for, military conquest.

In 1930 the Emperor, at the time of his Coronation, stated that he would welcome and grant every facility for developing the resources of his country, and I am sure he would have been glad to substantiate his words to a concern that would help to develop his country, and find employment for his subjects. Only a portion of the money now being spent by Italy on equipping and dispatching troops to Africa would have been sufficient to have given Italy an economic control of Abyssinia and have provided scope for many thousands of Italian subjects. The Italian commercial mission departed—but up to the time of our leaving Abyssinia there were no signs of any operations of any size being put in hand by Italians.

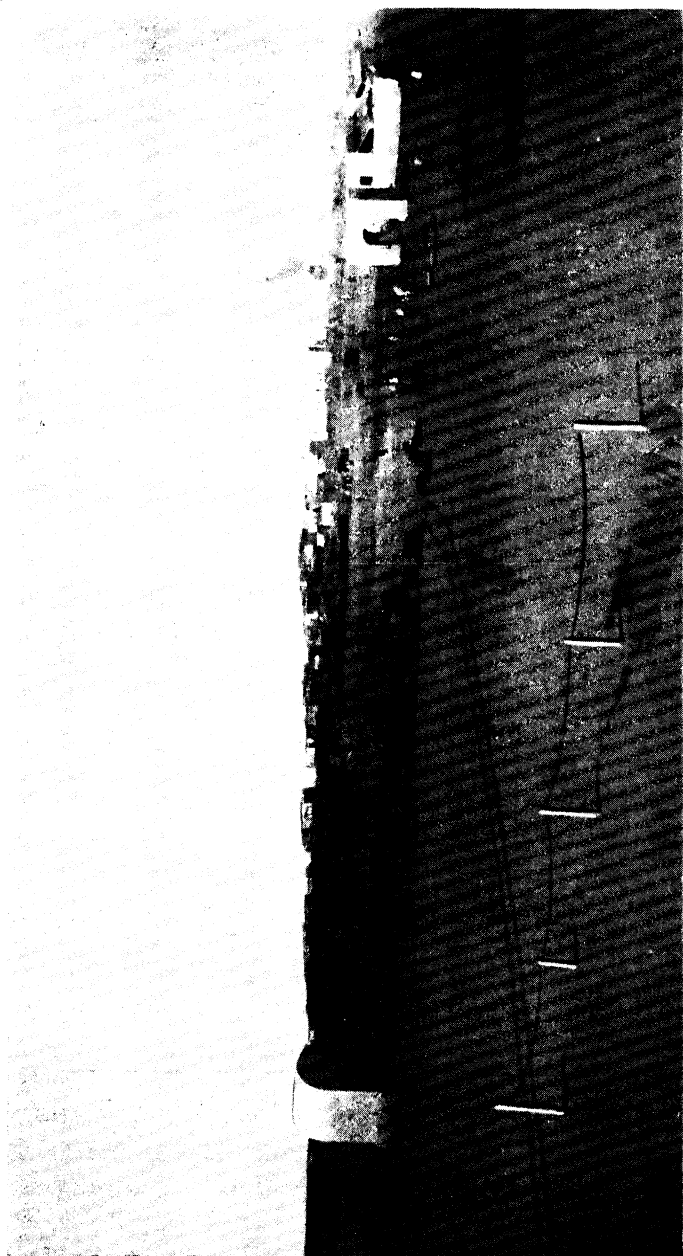
The Emperor and his Government have not accepted slave-trading and slave-raiding in their country as complacently as one might imagine from what has been written on the subject in Italian papers. The “brain” of this business has been a European directing operations in safety, and making money, whilst others took the risk and suffered the hardships of the trek across country to the Red Sea. This gentleman was most difficult to catch, but he has now retired from active participation and the business has dwindled almost to nothing.

About six years ago a French newspaper sent out a small party of journalists to Abyssinia to investigate and “write up” the slave-traffic. On arrival they got into touch with the brains behind the business and he promised that he would give them notice of a slave caravan leaving for the coast and would offer them every facility for getting first-hand information. In the meantime they were to remain in Addis Ababa.

My husband and I were having tea one afternoon on the veranda of the hotel at Dire Dawa when three dishevelled men, clad in khaki shorts and shirts, appeared looking very much out of place. As they passed us they



(1 and 3) Typical Abyssinian country. (2) A waterfall at Mulu. (4) The result of a storm---an Abyssinian river in flood



Zeila, British Somaliland

saluted most punctiliously, and my husband returned the salute but remarked to me that he hadn't the faintest idea who they were. Shortly after they reappeared, and at some distance seemed to be conferring, and then one of them, obviously taking his courage in his hands, came up to us and standing very correctly at attention addressed himself to my husband in fluent French, introducing himself and his companions, who had come up by now. My good man, not to be outdone in politeness, replied he was glad to meet them, and what could he do for them? And then the official look disappeared to be replaced by one of bewilderment—at my husband's very English French accent! He, poor man, had been mistaken for the Acting Governor of French Somaliland, and the atmosphere changed. I must admit that the mistake was quite excusable, as there was a very close resemblance, and I had occasion to remark on it later in Djibouti and again in Addis Ababa. Others had made the same mistake.

The three journalists had flown down from Addis Ababa, and in landing had crashed at Harrar, but no one was hurt. They were on the trail of the slave-caravan. They had been patiently waiting in Addis Ababa for the promised notice of the departure of the caravan in the interior, and had only learned by accident that the caravan was then well on its way to the coast. They had been left in the lurch, but thought that they would be able to catch up by taking a plane down to Dire Dawa and going across the Danakil country to intercept the caravan before it reached the coast. They had not a chance in a thousand in that inhospitable and dangerous country, and the "brains" had, without the slightest doubt, no intention of letting them see anything, and would have taken the necessary steps to prevent them getting anywhere near the route.

I learned later that the journalists had attempted the

journey but had been turned back, and were therefore unable to get any information on the subject. They returned to France disappointed men, and a very scurrilous book, written by one of them, shortly appeared dealing with the sordid and unbeautiful side of life in Addis Ababa. The book was very properly banned in Abyssinia.

A British-Abyssinian Commission has been in being for some years, defining the border between Abyssinia and British Somaliland, and it was with this Commission that the incident at Wal Wal occurred, bringing matters to a head. It is interesting now to recall attention to the official report upon the incident by the British officer with the commission. The report does not lay the least blame upon the Abyssinians, but does definitely state that the Italian officer was at fault. In any case, any of the maps of that part of the country which show Wal Wal at all place the spot well within the Abyssinian territory, so that it would appear that the Italians had no right to be there.

The telegraph line from Addis Ababa to Asmara, in Eritrea, was operated by Italians in Addis Ababa, and all cables, formerly, to the outside world were transmitted by this route. Cables from Europe took anything up to three days to be delivered in Addis Ababa. Complaints were frequently made of the long delay, and an inquiry was made as to where the delay took place. From Addis Ababa the line runs to Asmara, thence to Khartoum. It was definitely established that a telegraph message dispatched from London took only *fifteen seconds* to reach Khartoum, so it was obvious that the delay took place on the Italian portion of the line. Representations were repeatedly made, and messages would be expedited in transmission for two or three weeks, only however to fall back to the usual three days for transmission. Mutilations were frequent, and if the messages were in code they were quite unintelligible and necessitated either an undue waste

of time in trying to decipher the mutilated words, or a repetition being asked for, which of course meant another four days at least. I know—I acted as cable clerk for my husband.

The contract for the new wireless station, just outside Addis Ababa, was secured by an Italian firm. There were several delays in completion, and when the station was finally in working order the Italians refused to allow the service to be worked by the staff appointed by the Emperor. As the Italians had built the station, they demanded, and looked upon it as a right, that it should be worked by their nationals. The Emperor wanted French operators. A deadlock ensued, neither side would give way. I believe the station has been erected in the middle of the town, and it is, I understand from this station that radio messages are being received and transmitted.

From all I have heard, first hand, of Eritrea and Massawah, Italy has not made the most of that country as a colony. I believe the terrain is similar to the highlands of Abyssinia, the soil is fertile, and the climate just as good for Europeans. There is a railway from Massawah, the port, to Asmara, the chief town, but all that I have ever heard of Asmara makes it appear as a glorified Italian military equitation school. Massawah as regards climate is worse than Djibouti, as the Dahalak Islands shut off any breeze there may be from the Red Sea. In talking to captains and officers of ships who have called in at Massawah I have gathered the impression that it was the worst port in the Red Sea belonging to a European Power—at any rate, before troops were being poured in for the invasion of Abyssinia; probably things have improved now.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

AT one period the Italian Minister to Abyssinia was very keen on racing, riding, and horses generally, and as my husband was a judge with him at various race meetings we were very hospitably received at the Italian Legation. Never shall I, or the driver of our car, forget the first time we encountered the genuine Fascist salute as given by an Eritrean (Abyssinian) soldier. We had driven up to the legation, and as we were nearing the house our driver suddenly applied the brakes and pulled the car up with a jerk, throwing us both on to the front seats, and the gravel kicked up from the road played a rat-tat on the body of the car. We were unable to see the cause of this sudden "hold-up," and when we looked out saw an *askari* holding up his hand in salute. We told the driver to go on, but he insisted on explaining to us that he could not, in face of that signal to stop. When we, in turn, had explained that it was not a signal but a salute, the driver's look of scorn was accompanied with the remark that he had served with the British and Indian armies, but never had he seen any salute like that.

It was a matter for comment, whilst we were in Abyssinia, that whilst Italy had so few vested interests in the country so many Italian consulates were being established in the interior. There were three or four British Consuls, apart from Addis Ababa, but they were on the borders between Kenya, British Somaliland and the Sudan to keep an eye on slave-raiding, and by their presence acted as a deterrent. There was no similar reason for the Italians. About 1931 a slight fracas took place on the

Eritrean border when some Italian patrols wandered into Abyssinian territory and were fired upon. The same year a force of 15,000 Abyssinians, under the Governor of Harrar, was marched to thrust back Italian penetration which had reached Karanle on the Webi Shebeli, and was undoubtedly a movement on the Italian part in the direction of Djimma province.

We were in Addis Ababa at the time and greatly exaggerated reports of the incidents got about, and feeling ran high amongst the Abyssinians at these unwarranted intrusions. Our servants were very excited indeed, and the head boy told us that there would be definitely war with Italy, as they wanted this country; it might be in two or three years, and from recent indications he would appear not to be far out in his estimate. He went on to say that in a war with Italy every Abyssinian would fight willingly.

It was at about the same time that I realized first that Abyssinia would do everything in her power to retain her national independence, and that it was not a mere figure of speech; if she were ordained to lose that independence she would have any other Power, but not Italy at any price. The British were feared; the French taken very little account of; the Italians were scorned; these sentiments came from an Abyssinian of education and standing, and when I asked for a reason for these differences I was told that Italy might be more powerful these days, but Abyssinia had beaten her fairly at Adowa and had not forgotten it. As regards the British, what could one do with a nation that carried justice to an extreme end in a country like Abyssinia. I asked for instances, and he gave me the following. The Indian cavalymen forming the escort to the British Minister in Addis Ababa are sent over from India for a period of five years at a stretch. Naturally they take unto themselves temporary wives. One of the women was unfaithful to her Indian

Sowar, and he shot her. He was tried by the British Consul, sentenced to death, and the sentence duly carried out in Addis Ababa. A nation that could do that in Abyssinia had every reason to be feared!

Italy has an artificially fostered and rising birth-rate. Prizes are given for large families, and the books of Marie Stopes are banned. With an increasing population the numbers are increased by the return, to their native land, of Italian emigrants, principally from South America. It has been estimated that there are, or were, eight or nine millions of Italians living out of Italy, and if only a portion of this number return to Italy and are not allowed to leave it again, it is not surprising that the country is not large enough, and does not produce enough, to support the increase in the population and outlets must therefore be found for this surplus population. Even the large acreage that is being reclaimed in Italy and put under cultivation does not seem to be able to cope with the increase.

Hodeidah, in the Red Sea, not far from Aden, has received quite a lot of attention from Italy during recent years, and Italian steamers are making it a regular port of call. Hodeidah is the port for the Yemen, and is an unsavoury spot, with the export of coffee as its principal trade. There are a few hides and skins available, and Hodeidah itself cannot be the magnet. It is perhaps the Yemen that is the attraction but there is very little chance of Italy ever making the Yemen into an Italian colony.

Italy very generously (!) offered to give Abyssinia a port in Eritrea, Assab, and a corridor to that port. The offer included development of the port, and construction by the Italians of a road from there to Dessie, half-way to Addis Ababa, if the Ethiopian Government would build the other half of the road. The bait was not sufficiently attractive; there has been no development of

the port and no progress, apparently, with the construction of the road.

This idea of Italy seeking colonies is not exactly new. Not many years ago there were negotiations between her and France, when it was suggested that if Italy would cede her territory in North Africa to France other territories might be found for Italian colonization. Italy has spent vast sums on her North African colony; France wants a convenient "jumping off" place in North Africa from where her African troops could be easily and quickly despatched across to Europe in case of another war. France has handed over to Italy a certain number of shares in the Franco-Ethiopian Railway between Addis Ababa and Djibouti and declared that she has no interests in Abyssinia. This does not, however, seem to satisfy Italy, and she is looking for other outlets, but let her do so without going to war to achieve her aim.

The Italy of to-day is certainly not the Italy before the Great War and during the early part of that War. Throwing in her lot, as she did, with the Allies and being on the winning side has changed her mentality and that of her people, but has it really altered the essential characteristics of the Italian? Under Mussolini and his Fascist regime she seems to have been rejuvenated, but it still remains to be seen whether the mercurial and unstable temperament of the Italian has been also changed.

Italy is entering into an adventure fraught with immense risks, not only in the cost of lives and in the immense expenditure of money, which she can ill afford, for the maintenance of her armies in the field in Africa, but also in the loss of her prestige, perhaps. She has already a tremendous budget deficit, her foreign credit is not of the best, her exchange difficulties are great, and she is dependent upon foreign countries for her raw materials. True, her home industries may benefit by the

work of providing for the requirements of her armies, but will this be "wealth" as it is generally understood?

In Africa there will be scarcity of water in the low-lying tropical countries, sun strokes, perhaps an epidemic of cholera, and generally a tremendous amount of sickness owing to her lack of practical knowledge of the tropics and special requirements. She will have untold difficulties in carrying on a war in Abyssinia; her casualties from military actions may be negligible, but the conditions will take a large toll of her troops. The Italian papers may be forbidden to write the truth, but invalids returning to their homes will be able to speak the truth. There may be a certain amount of enthusiasm at first for service in Africa, but will this enthusiasm survive in spite of Mussolini's martial words? If Italy, or Mussolini, persists in her beating of the big drum and actually does invade Abyssinia, history alone will pronounce the verdict.

CHAPTER TWENTY

THOSE were happy, exciting and eventful days I spent in Abyssinia, and now that I have left the country I carry only pleasant memories, but if I am asked whether I would like to go back I hesitate. We were there fifty years too late, or fifty years too soon; the country was in a state of transformation, or like a snake in the act of shedding a skin. It was taking on new ways and manners, adopting modern methods, whilst it had not done with some of the old customs and traditions. Whatever may have been my experiences, pleasant or unpleasant, when it came to departure, on leave or permanently, I must confess to a feeling as if I were leaving a cage. This, I expect, was owing to the isolation from the rest of the world, and the journey down the line, before we could again make contact with the stream that led to civilization and all that it stands for.

I miss those early evenings in Addis Ababa, and the enchantment of the African night, when the landscape is etched out in black and white under a full moon. To be out in the open, when the tropical dusk tumbles down upon you, almost like a curtain; when the smell of burning dung or eucalyptus comes into evidence; and from the scattered *tukhuls*, buried among the eucalyptus, drift up sounds of voices, children calling, cattle slowly wending their way back to their *tukhul*; and to see the lighted windows of your home beckoning in the near distance: for these I would return.

What the future holds for Abyssinia it is impossible to say. Will the territorial greed of a nation, under the impetus of an upstart regime, destroy its independence,

or will the will and determination of its people thrust back the intruder and retain its integrity? Will victory hasten the development of the country or will it make it more isolated than ever and do without the benefits of civilization?

Whatever may be your fate, I cannot help but wish you well, Abyssinia.

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